SOME HELPS FOR SCHOOL LIFE

SERMONS PREACHED AT

CLIFTON COLLEGE

1862–1879

BY THE REV.

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TO THOSE

WHO, IN DIFFERENT CAPACITIES,

SHARING OUR COMMON LIFE, HELPED FORWARD

THE EARLY GROWTH OF CLIFTON COLLEGE,

I dedicate

THIS BRIEF MEMORIAL OF OUR CHAPEL SERVICES,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE DEAD, IN GRATITUDE TO ALL,

AND IN THE HOPE OF AN EVER-GROWING GOOD NAME

TO THE SCHOOL

WHICH IS THE HOME OF OUR COMMON ASSOCIATIONS

AND OF CHERISHED MEMORIES.

J. P.

Jan. 1880.

Εν σῶμα καὶ ἓν Πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν.—EPH. iv. 4.

PREFACE.

THIS brief selection from the Sermons preached at Clifton College during the first sixteen years of its existence is published in compliance with the request of those with whom I was so long associated there as my colleagues, pupils, or Members of the Council.

The volume being intended specially for those who are already familiar with the life of the College and its round of teaching, I have preferred to make it quite short, and have thought it best to confine my selection to a small number of Sermons dealing with lessons, which, however obvious, are, as I have learned from School and University experience, most likely to be of some practical service to a community of boys living together in the constant publicity and close intercourse of a large school, and preparing for the duties of a responsible manhood.

Many other subjects, which will occur to every one who may turn over the Table of Contents, would have

rightly claimed a place in the volume had it professed a larger scope; but in a collection of Sermons few persons will be found to complain of brevity as a defect, and it will be generally admitted that to instil these elementary lessons of life and conduct is the first duty of a Christian teacher, whilst few of us would venture to say that we have outgrown the need of such reminders as they bring to us, or that we know any society of boys or men which can afford to dispense with their frequent reiteration.

J. PERCIVAL.

OXFORD, *March* 1880.

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PART I.

Spring Term.

I.

CORPORATE LIFE.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. — ROMANS xii. 4, 5.

IT is proverbial that men are not the same in crowds as they are when alone. Our individual life, when we are living apart and in solitude, is something different from our life as members of any society or congregation. Men's impulses and emotions, and almost as it would sometimes seem even their convictions, certainly their actions and words, take a different tone and shape when they are moving in the midst of any great mass of life which is similarly stirred around them, and the power of which is acting upon them. In other words, a society is not merely the same as the individuals that compose it. There is a latent fire in men's souls which does not burn up till it gathers an accumulated force by the

contact of life with life. There is a certain infection of natures which goes from man to man as if by some chemical process, so that our juxtaposition and our common life give to all of us new qualities. We here in this congregation are not merely the same six hundred isolated souls that we should be if scattered over the whole island.

As we sit side by side, with one purpose and one aim, uttering the same words, thinking the same thoughts, stirred in some degree by the same impulses, and penetrated by the same influence, so that our life moves all together in something like a rhythmic harmony, and swells out with the same breath, and we feel a spell upon us which we cannot exactly define,—in such a case we are not the same as before we met: for the time at any rate, if not for all time, and, as a consequence of this, our life is a different thing. And this change is what we understand by the difference between corporate and individual life, between sympathetic union and isolation. This question, as you will easily see, is one of deep practical interest to us in a place like this, since by the mere fact of our coming together, and living so close to one another, we create a new element of life which is reacting on every one of us with its influences, either fatal or healing, as the case may happen to be.

It is, of course, possible for this common influence in any society to be utterly bad; the new life that is struck

out from contact of soul with soul may in any particular case be a spark of baneful and destroying fire; and in such a case, I need not say that they are happy who go not near to that society.

But, on the other hand, we have to remember that social, or corporate life, is a necessity to all of us. Your nature cannot grow to its full and healthy stature if it grows apart and isolated. There *are* plants, no doubt, that cannot bear the strong sunlight, or the rich growth of other life around them; but these are weakly or curious things. And with human life it is not so very different. If your nature is to reach its full and vigorous growth, you must breathe the wholesome and strengthening air of the best and purest social influences. We were not made to live alone. If you wish to try this doctrine by your holiest things, and your best, you have only to consider the social character of Christian faith. This faith, which is our everlasting hope, did not spring up in some isolated corner; our Saviour did not preach His Gospel unto us out of an unapproachable solitude; His first act was to gather a society round Him in the midst of the common working-day world, and to build up His kingdom on the foundations of social life. Again, after He ascended to heaven, the first instinct of the new-born Church was to have all things in common; to sink the individual in the social, the selfish in the generous; and so on from age to age, in

different degrees and different forms, but with one unvarying spirit, Christian life has drawn its force and its fervour, its marvellous influence, from common social action: "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." And so we do not go for our closest communion with God into the solitude or the silence, but to the house of Common Prayer, and to that table around which we kneel in company, overshadowed by the same Spirit.

These things seem to tell us that we can hardly turn too often to consider what our joint social life is, of what sort it is, what we are gathering from it, and what we are giving to it. For it does not follow of necessity that a society has in it a strong corporate life, in any high or true sense, merely because it happens to be a society. I put aside the question of a bad or poisonous social atmosphere, because I trust that I have no cause to speak of that here. Nay, I venture to hope that even a pestilent individual influence would be trodden down and stamped out by the general sense of honour and right feeling, else why are we called a Christian school?

But what we have always to remember is that it is possible to have a society in which there is no strong corporate life of any kind; and that the worth and value of any body depends upon the strength and the direction of its joint life.

In an old society you can hardly fail to find a tradi-

tional life which is more or less strongly influential. The sense of close union becomes engrained by the lapse of many generations, and grows by long use into the very fibre of the society. We feel, in fact, that this sense of oneness is an essential part of the body, and that its roots have woven themselves all through it; but in a young place we cannot expect this to be exactly the same. If we take our own life here, and compare it with that of an older school, we feel something of this difference. Our joint life has not yet had time to stamp itself deep down; we have still to work and wait for that. Our aim and tone and character are embodied as yet in no monuments and written in no indelible traditions; we are more liable to be swayed by individual influence than we shall be hereafter in the generations to come. And yet, when we compare our life to-day with that which began here a few years ago, we feel how rapidly it is possible for corporate life to grow and root itself where men or boys are brought together into one body.

For a healthy and active common life we require an accumulation of local or special influences; we require some spirit of good and true aim to be felt as speaking to us in the very air of the place, when once we know it; there ought to be an atmosphere around us which is felt by all who come within its circle to be somehow stronger and better than any ordinary individual will

or purpose. We feel something of this ennobling influence when we stand in any ancient place, with its walls and trees, its names and memories speaking unto us out of a great historic past, and eloquent with stirring associations. The boy born of an ancient and noble house learns his first lessons of duty and nobleness from the ancestral faces that look down upon him from ancient pictures, telling of great deeds or high purposes, and calling upon him to do likewise. So also the members of a time-honoured school feel in some degree the influences of a similar teaching in the voices that seem to come to them from previous generations which once sat where they are sitting now, and in the memories that cluster thick round great or well-known names in which they feel a pride.

These are helps which we of course cannot boast as yet in this place, though we can if we choose leave somewhat of them to those who are to come after us. And it is open to us to supply their place in our own life. Every one who is striving for the best and truest common life, who longs to see more of a pure and manly public spirit, and to feel the force of public opinion active always and active everywhere on the side of things that are good and true, must feel the want of a long-remembered past which might have been a stimulating and inspiring influence. Boy and masters alike must feel this sometimes. Let us then make this

very sense of our want our instrument for doing the work which we have before us to do. Poverty is often the mother of noblest purposes; and so too our poverty in this matter of great traditions ought to be our daily stimulus. The man who feels that he has no ancestral name to lean upon, and yet determines not to be left behind in the race of high distinction or great achievement, is braced to a higher and more vigorous life by the sense of having a greater work to do,—he is stronger in the race from knowing that he has to trust solely to his own unaided strength. And why should it not be so with us? Every master and every boy who desires that our school should wear the shape and be stamped with the stamp of true worthiness may fairly be called upon to remember that as we have no past we depend all the more on our present efforts; and though we have received no legacies we are born to an inheritance which lies before us, and we are carving it out, day by day, in the tenor of our social life.

Let us acknowledge then the vital importance of this corporate life of ours; let us learn to estimate the value of the tone, and spirit, and character of this atmosphere in which we live, and we shall all do something to cultivate and purify it.

Masters can cultivate it by rousing enthusiasm for knowledge, and truth, and manliness, and refinement, and all virtues; they can cultivate it by drawing boys

inside the circle of their own higher life, by interweaving the thoughts and ways, the spirit and the tone of their own life with that of the boys to whom they live closest; for in proportion as we are found to be all one body, living together and not apart, so shall we draw nearer to that which we may hope some day to become.

And boys cultivate this common life, which we hope will be our stamp and mark, when they look well to the force of their own example, walking blameless, and upright, and true; and when besides they remember that public life means public spirit, if it is to have any virtue in it. Next to a pure and blameless life the greatest virtue which any one among you can exercise, situated as you are in this place, is that which you know by this name of public spirit. If you cultivate the sense of brotherhood, which lies at the bottom of this quality; if you follow its dictates, and denounce everything that is mean, or selfish, or in any way base (for these are the things that stand opposed to it), then you cannot fail to sow the seeds of a good and true life, which will grow by your efforts, as time goes on, into a life that can never die. It may seem, perhaps, as if this were scarcely religious teaching; but let me ask you not to be misled by any conventional words. The root and centre of our religious life lies in these common things. For what, if we consider it, is true religion? It is the purifying and ennobling portion of our daily

life and actions. It is to know Christ, and to grow like Him; and we have to remember that He draws us to Him by the cords of our common life, and by every good element in it.

What is the end for which you come here? First of all, no doubt, that you may increase in knowledge, and cultivate your understanding; you come, as you would say, to acquire useful learning. But this is not all; it is not even the greatest part; your education in this school is intended to make your life a "nobler, cleaner, fairer thing" than it was before, or could have been without your schooling here. Whatever helps to this great end is the working of the Spirit of God; whatever hinders that work is the devil's own doing.

Let us look well, therefore, to the influences of our society, and fan the flame of a pure and healthy social life; for doing this we feel that we are doing the work which God has given us to do, as His sons; and if we fail to do this we are not worthy to be here.

And above all, we have to remember that whatever our life may be, whatever it is day by day, good or bad, baneful or wholesome, its effects will not, and cannot, die; we leave it here to bear its proper fruits in the souls of those who come after us. In the chapel of another school, it was said once by one to whom we look back as among the greatest of English teachers (and the words will apply in some measure to us also):

"The good and the evil, the nobleness or the vileness, which may exist on this ground now will live and breathe here in the days of our children; these will form the atmosphere in which they will live hereafter, either wholesome and invigorating, or numbing and deadly. This roof, under which we are now assembled, will hold, it is probable, our children and our children's children; may they be enabled to think when they shall kneel, perhaps, over the bones of some of us, that they are praying where their fathers prayed; and let them not, if they mock in their day the means of grace here offered, encourage themselves with the thought that this place had long ago been profaned with equal guilt, and that they are but infected with the spirit of our ungodliness." Yes, it is a question for every one of us to keep clear before him—What sort of legacy am I going to leave behind me? Heaven and earth may pass away, but the effects of our lives upon other immortal souls will remain for ever and ever!

II.

OUR ATTITUDE AND INFLUENCE.

Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.
—ROMANS xii. 11.

YOU would hardly be able to find in any other passage in any book so remarkable a list of practical exhortations as that which is contained in this chapter to the Romans, part of which was read to you as the Epistle this morning. And I think I may add that these three which I have chosen as my text have in them a certain special fitness for your consideration at a time like this, when you are just gathering once more to begin again your life here, or in the case of some of you to begin here a new life, the hopes, the prospects, and the dangers of which you cannot as yet forecast with any certainty.

So then as you sit here, you whose memories tell of past experiences in this place, which may help you to form resolutions to-day and to walk in safe paths through the coming weeks, and you who are here for the first time, all alike require to be reminded of this apostolic voice calling unto us to be not slothful in

business, to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. For my part I can never return to our life here, and contemplate the possibilities of the term which is beginning, thinking of the indelible lines of good or evil which it will write upon your characters and affections, without many anxious thoughts as to what this dark tablet of the future will be when it is written over, and without praying that each one of you may keep his own feet in pure and straight paths, and that he may not incur the black sin of leading another into any evil.

No doubt there are many among us who are genuinely in earnest about their life, and about the life of our school as one body, that life which cannot fail to affect your own, just as yours in turn affects the whole. To such of you thoughts of this kind come naturally, when your eyes are fixed on that veil behind which are lying the things that are to come; and to all such this twelfth chapter to the Romans is a very storehouse of guiding precepts. But I cannot forget how many there are who shut their eyes and stop their ears against these thoughts and injunctions; and this not so much from mere carelessness or forgetfulness, as because they do not like to bring themselves face to face with such matters. How often does it happen that the words which give life and strength to those who embrace them as helps and guides stir nothing but a feeling of

shrinking in the minds of many, and a desire to forget and escape from them! And when this is so, why is it? Is it not because these calls tell of restraint and sacrifice, because they tell of things which you must give up, and which you had rather not give up yet, because they tell of new ways in which you feel you ought to walk, whereas you cannot bring yourself to begin yet? It is this foolish, secret, ruinous hankering after a lax code of life for the present, and the delusive hope which so often goes with it, that by-and-by you will begin afresh, this mixture of sloth and depravity and cowardice, which spoils the virtue of so many lives, and makes the common tone of so many societies so utterly unworthy of the high instincts within us, and of the vocation to which we all know that we are called in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Knowing how common and how dangerous this state of mind and life is, knowing how men and boys alike flee away from their conscience, with the demoniacal suggestion rising in their hearts—let us alone, Thou Son of God—knowing with what perversity they will attempt to stifle warning voices for a little longer, steeping their senses and their reason in present indulgences or idle ways, just as the hunted game buries its head in the nearest bush, knowing and seeing all this exemplified continually, one cannot but return with anxious feelings to those times when our life is begin-

ning afresh in a new chapter, with old trammels to some extent broken off, and with new opportunities ready to be seized for guidance and for strength. These are the times for praying that every one who is weak or wavering, or inclined to dally with present sin and distant hopes of amendment, should put himself now, and without any more delays, face to face with God's call, which, let us remember, is always a call to immediate and present action, and not to something far off. Would that I could persuade all you who now hear me to look at every call to duty and earnestness and purity as one which you must consider and act upon while the accents are yet in your ears. Every such call as those which I seem to hear St. Paul's eager, fervent pleading voice speaking to us, whenever I read these Epistles of his, would then be a daily and hourly helper against present temptations, and a helper too on which you would trust with more confidence and more affection day by day from this time forward.

How many of you are here to-day with anything like a real resolution in your hearts that you will try to carry out such injunctions as those in my text, and that you will try now and not some day hereafter? It is this temptation to the "some day hereafter" which I fear most. The tempter will whisper that you are very young, and that by-and-by will be soon enough for these things; and I can only pray and urge you to thrust

from you every such insidious temptation. The true answer to all such voices is plain and ready, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

There is a very sad and tragic vein running through almost every part of human life—critics call it a vein of irony—and this is naturally to be seen strongest of all in the life of the young, and it is our duty to diminish it as much as may be, by rousing you to consider well the right way of life, and not to delay about the choice of it. For see how many begin over and over again a course of life here or elsewhere, which may prove a course of growth to all goodness and knowledge, or (and does not our experience tell us that this too is possible?) which may be one of idleness and waste and sin, and begin it without any feeling of its gravity or dangers or momentous importance, and in mere thoughtless expectation of coming enjoyment, or it may be with secret hopes of freedom from home restraints, and of pleasure or indulgence, while on the other hand all round their careless souls the air is laden with the anxious thoughts and yearning prayers of those who nursed their early life, and now send them forth into this unknown field to sow the seeds of that which is to be hereafter. And such is no doubt the case of some of you. You are looking into the future without care, without thought, without inquiry, and without anything perhaps but the hope of pleasures and enjoyments, while day and night there are anxious

hearts praying that your steps may go straight, and while we your teachers, and, as we would fain be, your guides and friends, are stirred by anxiety scarcely less strong than that of those who trusted you to us, and while I and all who have to speak to you in this chapel, or in your form, or in your house, are feeling about for words which may touch and stir your hearts and rouse you to something like an earnest and high-toned life. Is it not so with some of you? While all this is going on around you and for you, while care, and thought, and interceding prayers, and sacrifices, which you know not of, are all being offered up for your soul's life, what are you doing, or what are you intending to do, to keep that life pure and clean in the sight of Him Who sees it always? Some of you very likely are here in the midst of all these Divine influences of earnest endeavour and interceding prayer, which I seem to see hovering over you, just as the clouds in some great master's painting grow as we gaze upon them into a seraphic throng, and you, the while, go on your careless way with dull ears and heavy eyes, dead to all these surroundings and incentives, because your minds are occupied with other thoughts; or it may happen in some rare instance here and there, because from ignorance or folly or familiarity with sin, the heart has been hardened into a cynical and wretched state, so as not to see or feel the difference between the good and the evil. But now if you will

only listen to these injunctions addressed to the Roman Church as words addressed to you to-day, you will feel something of what the Christian spirit and endeavour ought to be—"not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." These three expressions show clearly enough how St. Paul would have us shape our life. For all these, when his words are more exactly expressed in English, have reference to our whole attitude and aim in life. His words are—not backward in zeal or energy or earnestness, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. In these we seem to be reading the very characteristics of his own life. Let us try, then, and carry with us these injunctions of his, for which also we have his own great example. He bids us not be wanting in zealous and devoted energy; he calls upon us to let our light shine before men, to let it be seen and felt round about us from our bold and outspoken advocacy of that which is right and true what is the spirit that we are of; and we may do well to remember that even one such among us may prove a pillar of strength to those who are weak and wavering around him. It is the shrinking which St. Paul is here deprecating, the shrinking from openly speaking out the feelings and principles which are the guide of every true and upright life; it is this which so often gives the bad elements in society such a great advantage over the good. It is a strange and melancholy weakness that the

pure and upright and honourable should so often be ashamed to speak out the things they feel about words or acts which they despise and abominate; for all who yield to this weakness, besides the injury which they do to their own souls, must surely forget, or they would not do it, how they are thus helping to mislead the weak or the sinful by letting him think that his sin is not so bad or his conduct not so very contemptible.

There is hardly anything which gives so much encouragement to any form of idleness or sin in a society, as conduct on the part of those who would not themselves join in it which leads to the belief that they think it a light matter, whereas in reality perhaps they hate it. It is thus for the most part that a low tone fixes itself in a society on any subject; because of the weakness, or cowardice, or supineness of the better portion of it. Let it once be felt that the best among you are afraid to express their hatred and contempt for things which are contemptible or hateful, or that they are indifferent about them, that in fact they are just what St. Paul says we must not be—backward in zeal, wanting in earnestness —*τῇ σπουδῇ ὀκνηροί*—and then you cannot but know what will soon follow; the good will become timid and shrinking and feeble, and the bad will lift up their heads and walk boldly. One of two things must inevitably happen, either the good that is among us must be a good which you are not ashamed to confess, and

which declares itself the enemy of evil, and wherever this is truly done all that is base will hide itself; or else we shall have the baser elements amongst us triumphant and shameless and strong. This is the choice that lies before every society, and the result must be according as we choose, each one of us, to live the true and open Christian life, based on a genuine and fervent faith in Christ and His love, and feeling that we are in all things the servants of our God; or as we choose to follow the flesh and the lusts thereof, and to let evil exist around us unrebuked and unchecked. In one case it is health and salvation, in the other a ruinous end. And these are questions which come to the youngest among us no less than to the leaders. If you dare to confess that you fear God, you will often disarm a tempter; if you dare to call a sin an abomination, you will often do something to save the sinner.

The service of God, which is the service of purity and truth, openness and honesty, is sure to be found a service full of happiness, and far easier than it may seem, if only you are not ashamed to confess it as that to which you have sworn obedience, and to which you mean to be faithful and true. Consider these things, I pray you, now; and as we gather next Sunday around the Lord's Table let us register our vows afresh, that we will do the things He would have us to do, through Jesus Christ, our Example and Redeemer.

III.

OUR ATTITUDE AND INFLUENCE.

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.—ISAIAH lv. 8, 9.

OUR first impulse in reading words like these is to think of their historical application to those to whom they were first addressed. We consider these Old Testament utterances as spoken specially to Israel. We read them in the light that is thrown back upon them by the newer and clearer revelations of which we are the inheritors, and we see at once how true they were.

But supposing we read them as declarations about moral and spiritual phenomena which are continually reappearing and repeating themselves, we shall for the most part find them no less true. If we read this history of Israel as only one of innumerable illustrations of Divine love and human imperfections, it will often bring home to us startling lessons about our own daily life. My ways are higher than your ways, saith the Lord, and My thoughts than your thoughts. As we think of the blindness which is here suggested; as we

remember the veil which overspread the hearts of the Israelites, and made them incapable of seeing a Divine message excepting through the distorting medium of their own prejudices; as we reflect how they looked for a Messiah, with an expectation so intense that it became the centre of all their thought, but how they stereotyped this expectation in the shape of their own narrow conceptions, so that when He came they could not recognise Him; as we dwell upon this picture, we see how easy it is for men to live enveloped in an atmosphere which hides from them all true and perfect light. And this is a lesson which we might learn much nearer home than in Jewish history. It crops up on every side of us, for Israel is no rare or exceptional illustration of the veil of blindness or prejudice spread over the human heart. But the history of the Jews does perhaps afford the clearest example anywhere to be found of the additional lesson that it is possible, and indeed not rare, for men to become so enveloped in this atmosphere which distorts every ray of light that they can never again rise above it, that the clear and unclouded heaven is shut out entirely from their view, and they go on revolving even to the end in that which they have allowed to gather so thick and so dark around them. With most nations this has been so in some degree, and it is deplorably the case with innumerable individuals.

Let us recognise the law which we may see in these

things. It seems as though spiritual blindness and error, perversity of soul, and depravity of affections, which spring up perhaps in a misguided boyhood, and gather strength through a careless or depraved youth, and root themselves still more deeply in a cynical and hardened manhood—it seems as though they act in accordance with the same law of gravity or centrality as the earth to which our feet are clinging, or the physical atmosphere which we breathe. "The laws above," it has been said, "are sisters of the laws below." In other words, as in external nature, so also in our spiritual and intellectual life there is an unbroken continuity. "Atom is drawn to atom in the moral and spiritual and intellectual as in the physical creation;" and thus whatever we once receive into our system has a tendency to hang around us for ever. And this being so, it is found to be very hard to throw off into space and travel away from the blindness or depravity of thought or act to which we may have once surrendered ourselves. And hence the risk that comes to every individual of an atmosphere gathering round him, and overclouding all his life, an atmosphere of dull perceptions about right and wrong, about truth and falsehood, about purity and impurity, which makes it impossible for the white and uncoloured light of Divine truth to penetrate down into his nature; so that if God were to send upon us to-day a new revelation, to how many of us might He not address

these same words from the old world: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." For, indeed, how many things there are in our thoughts and habits and opinions, and in some it may be even of our most fundamental notions, in regard to which during our calmer and clearer and higher moments we feel that we are still far short of that truth and that purity which dwell unchangeable in the heavens.

It is our business, however, to try and see if we cannot lift up our own souls and our own society at any rate as high as may be above these clouds of ignorance and error which are always gathering over us; and no doubt we shall all succeed according to the measure of our sincerity and earnestness, since force is never spent without result. Strength of will and high purposes, earnestness and devotion, and declared hatred of things which are base, are all contagious, no less than other gifts of different kinds. They strike out sparks from kindred elements wherever they go, and make themselves visible; for the sympathetic and imitative elements in our nature are not altogether confined to those parts of it which are bad. Just as vice begets vice, and indulgence begets indulgence, and as he who indulges in one sin often becomes the accursed parent of many, so virtue also begets virtue, and vigour is sure to create for itself followers and imitators.

And the more closely any society is welded together, the more of corporate and less of separate individual life there is in it, the greater is the danger of deflection from clear and true notions, if false notions are allowed to root themselves in any corner of it; while, on the other hand, it is all the more easy for the strong and the earnest to send a current of right tone and feeling through the whole body.

Where waves of opinion and of influence pass with greatest force from one soul to another, from one intelligence, from one conscience to another, there we see the general tone and the general life influenced and moulded sometimes with strange rapidity.

This quickness of action in the sympathetic current is a fact which should stir us all to let our light so shine out before men that the force of the fire which is burning within us may not be unfelt; and if we require stimulating out of torpor (and we all require it every day, men at least as much as boys) it must surely rouse us when we feel that we are living always on a volcanic surface beneath which evil is sure to be working if our own good is dormant.

And nowhere, perhaps, could all this be more truly said than in a school society; for in school life there is nothing more remarkable than the sensitiveness of the whole body to the influence of a part. Isolated independent life, life which does not influence, becomes

almost impossible in a community so closely knit together; every pulse which beats in any one soul among us, be it a pulse of high purposes, or love of honour and truth and purity, or, on the other hand, a pulse of depraved indulgence or low tone, is almost sure to create a corresponding pulsation somewhere, and so the electric current winds itself round about us, in and out through all the corners of our life, from soul to soul and spirit to spirit, clothing us, it may be, in the white garments of the kingdom of heaven, or it may be in the cankerous chains of hell.

Think of this, you who are tempted or inclined to live carelessly and give fling to passion or indulgence—what is the thing that you are creating? And think of it also, you who have aspirations after a noble life, who feel your spirit swelling upwards, and your eyes watching the heavens for glimpses through the clouds into the everlasting blue.

Societies, to begin with, are mostly made up of the same materials. What is it, then, in which they differ? Simply in the element which fixes opinion and spreads the prevailing tone. It is mostly the bent and not the material which determines the character. The very best of human societies is sure to be disfigured by dark blots, just as in our Saviour's small band of chosen followers and intimate companions there was one who was impenetrable to the influence of His Divine pre-

sence: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

And so, also, among the very worst and most depraved communities there are sure to be some guileless and pure spirits who live in them untainted and pass out of them unsullied. When Baal was worshipped on every high place in Israel, and the hunted and weary prophet thought that he alone was left of the servants of God, he was told of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee. But then the question rises as we read, Where were all these when Elijah stood alone on Carmel, the solitary vindicator of that truth which was secretly recognised by so many hearts around him? And how different might have been the record of that dark period in Jewish history if all those who thus confessed God in secret had confessed Him openly—if timidity and cowardice had not been there! The strong spirit of Jezebel gave its character to the reign of Ahab in spite of all the weak and wavering spirits which no doubt shrank from Phœnician depravity, but allowed the current to sweep over them; while the spirit of the brave and solitary prophet has sent a thrill of strength through innumerable souls ever since, as it turned the tide of worship then and sowed seeds of good which never died again.

So then, considering these things, and they were written as our examples, let us not forget what it is

which will chiefly decide how far we are to be a society charged with good influences for those who come among us term after term, and in their time go out from us to carry the name of their school, and the spirit of it, into almost every department of our national and social life. Is our leaven to be what some of you have doubtless tended to make it, and are probably making it even now, the leaven of ignorance and idleness and depraved notions, which are already too prevalent among the richer classes of our country, or is it to be something better than these, and something of which we need not to be ashamed?

It rests with you who now hear me to determine this by the tone and the spirit which you are individually spreading and maintaining in the parts of your life which we do not see, as well as in that which is patent to all. And let us have no attempts to shift or put off responsibility in these matters.

Do not suppose that it is incumbent only upon those whom we entrust with a certain authority from their position among you to be honourable and upright and pure, and sensitive for our good name, and for the spirit which prevails among us. Every one who can, if he chooses, work good or evil is no less responsible than they. I think not of you now as arranged in particular forms, or as having arrived at any certain age, or as having lately taken any special vows upon you; it is as

members one of another from the youngest to the oldest, it is as elements in our society, capable every one of you by words, by acts, by habits, of making some one or other better or worse, that I speak to you about these laws of God.

Many of you think, perhaps, that you are young as yet, and there may be tempters to tell you that the ways into which they would lead you are pleasant ways, and that they are not wrong; and you persuade yourselves that you need not listen to words like mine, or others perhaps may persuade you thus. But now if you believe that I speak sincerely, let me persuade you to follow the impulses towards good which you feel within you, and not to be enticed away from them; and for the rest let me ask you to take my words on trust. Possibly it may happen to some of you to have no very strong or distinct feelings about points which it is my duty from a longer experience to urge upon you most earnestly. Is it too much to ask that you should believe my words to be sincere, and determine to obey them?

You may not feel, perhaps, as I do, how closely our future is linked to our present life. Yet it will be well for you individually, and for our school altogether, if you live as feeling that what we are to be depends upon what each one of us here now is. No man should underrate his own influence. And here especially we should all remember how soon influence makes its mark,

how short indeed is the period from seed-time to harvest! School generations come and go so quickly that a stamp is very soon impressed, and a spirit soon sown. And the thing which has once been sown and rooted, who shall eradicate? This is the question for you to put to yourselves in the spirit of honour (which is the spirit, remember, in which we treat you in all things), and in the spirit of that responsibility which every boy owes to all around him, as also to those who are to come after him, be his age or position what it may; and it ought, I think, to be very strong to stir us to what is good and keep us back from the evil.

To-day many of us have met at the Lord's Table for communion and strength in the good which we hope to do, and against the temptations which may beset us. And these solemn services are not only a source of strength to those who come, but a witness and a reminder, and it may be also a silent rebuke, to those who turn away. They warn us that our daily atmosphere, and the deadening influence of the things to which we habitually bow our will, may, perhaps, be shutting us out from seeing things as God sees them; and what if the gulf goes on widening between our thoughts and His?

Happy will it be for us if we can keep our thoughts so clear and our feelings so susceptible to things which point upwards, that we may not forget or cease to see

how every time we take the Bible in our hands we are taking up a Divine book which we should handle reverently as the book of truth, and that every time we kneel down in private prayer, every morning as we unite in our accustomed petitions, we are, or ought to be, really striving to see before us the Divine ideal, and to keep ourselves near in our life to Christ our Lord.

You are in the position of those to whom much is given, and woe be to your future if you hold your privileges in blindness, or pollute them by sinful ways! There is but one issue if we persist in ways which are not God's ways, and if we cling to thoughts which are not His thoughts. We are weaving the future out of our present life, and let us not deceive ourselves by thinking otherwise. I read to-day some words which I conceive to be generally true. "You cannot go," said the writer, "from the good to the evil at pleasure, and then back again to the good. There is a text," he added, "in a mystic philosopher which tells in figure the plain truth. He saw in a vision the angels and the devils, but the two companies stood not hand to hand or face to face, but foot to foot—the one perpendicular up, and the other perpendicular down."

This figure, if you consider it, may tell you something of your own life—is it aiming upwards, or is it not?

IV.

PUTTING AWAY CHILDISH THINGS.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.—1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 11.

THESE words, taken from this morning's Epistle, are, as you have doubtless observed, introduced there by way of illustration. The object of the Apostle in this chapter is to prove the pre-eminence of charity or love over every other Christian grace. "Whether there be prophecies," he says, "they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away; but charity never fails." "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." This, then, is the highest of all graces; and amidst all the imperfections of human life it remains the one perfect thing. Other gifts and graces change and grow, or do their work and pass away; they belong to our imperfect and transitional state, and they partake of its imperfections.

We are as yet, he argues, only in our spiritual child-

hood, and our very excellences are nothing more than shadows of that which shall be, except only this one virtue of love, which is the same here as before the throne of God, as perfect, as pure, when it is found in the hearts of men as in the angels of heaven; but in most things we see through a glass darkly. We know in part and we prophesy in part, living in hope that perfection will one day come to us; and knowing that when it comes this dim, struggling, partial light will pale before it, even as the characteristics of childhood give place to those of manhood, and live in the heart only as memories. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." It is right that you should know the purpose of these words as written by the Apostle in this familiar chapter, that you should remember, as you read or hear them from time to time, the lesson of human growth and development which they were meant to illustrate and impress; but I wish now to say a few words on their plain and literal sense.

You, who are so many of you halfway between childhood and manhood, can hardly have a more fitting subject of serious thought than the change which that growth ought to work in you. This is of all questions the one which at this moment affects you most intimately. Your physical and mental powers are growing day by

day, gradually you are developing from the child to the man, as the inevitable current of progress carries you onward. Your arm grows stronger and your foot swifter, your mind is the scene of new thoughts and new aspirations, new knowledge pours in upon it, it is carried away by new desires and new tastes, and you put from you childish things—what then are these things which are to be put away and left behind? We cannot approach these words of the Apostle without remembering the words of One greater than he—"Except ye become as little children, ye can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." And between the two there is no contradiction.

The Apostle bids us grow out of the childish character, the Saviour says, Look on the little child and remember that you must still be clothed in the childlike spirit, this must be your wedding garment.

The Apostle was thinking of the unformed character, the undisciplined temper, the untamed desires, which mark the child, and belong in some degree to his time of life, but must be put away by every one who would become in any true sense a man. The Saviour, on the other hand, dwelt only on the loving, trusting, unsuspecting, guileless spirit which is the root of all Christian faith. In this spirit which believeth all things, and hopeth all things, and thinketh no evil, this readiness to lean on the object of love, this susceptibility to good

impressions, he saw the true type of the heavenly mind; in these spiritual qualities of childhood he recognised those diviner qualities which are the brightest ornaments of true manhood, and without which Christian life is not possible. These we have to guard most jealously from the hardening touch of a world which is full of hostile influences.

But let us come now to the characteristics which we may suppose the Apostle to have had in his mind when he spoke of those things which the man has to put away.

And first of these stands levity—a fault to which nearly every one is more or less inclined in youth; and not the less dangerous because it often seems a slight and a trivial failing; and is, indeed, at times not easy to distinguish from the happiest elements of our nature.

For by levity I do not mean cheerfulness, or brightness, or merriment, good spirits, or the power of enjoyment; these are to be counted among God's best gifts, and to be numbered among the blessings without which the burden of life would be intolerable. Closely as levity may sometimes resemble these, it is in fact entirely different. It is the disposition to treat as trifling and unimportant things which are really of serious moment; it is the habit of making light of things which should not be made light of. I do not say that this is a disposition peculiar to childhood; but it is one of

those which, wherever we see them, we look upon as especially childish. It shows itself in various tendencies. There is, for instance, the tendency to make light of holy and sacred things, more common perhaps in childhood than in manhood, because we understand them less. Of it I need not speak except to stigmatize it. And I trust there is no special need to speak of it here. And then there is the tendency to make light of the feelings of others—a common fault in both boys and men. We are apt to follow the impulse of the moment, and indulge some fancy or desire without a thought of the pain we may be inflicting on others. Things are often done in a spirit of levity, done, as it is expressed, in sport, of which the doers would be thoroughly ashamed if they knew what the feelings of the sufferers are, or the results that may follow from their conduct.

In fact, levity is very often little else than thoughtlessness unchecked by right feeling.

But then this thoughtlessness, this absence of right feeling, is very often what makes all the difference between the noble and the worthless character. The boy or man who indulges in levity unfits himself for the higher calls of life; he does an injustice to his own nature, and degrades what he ought to elevate. There is no kind or form of this fault to which this does not apply; and it applies with special force to that of which I have just spoken, that which consists in playing with

the feelings of others, which has for its object to get a selfish pleasure, it may be by irritating or persecuting another, or causing annoyance, or taking advantage of weakness. All this, which in its lightest form we call levity, but in some of its forms by a harder name, implies entire forgetfulness of the nature of a worthy life, and of the relations in which men stand to each other as members of a Christian brotherhood. And I cannot understand how his can be a Christian character in whom we see no respect or tenderness for the feelings of others, or how such a one can claim to be a follower of Him Who would not break the bruised reed.

There is also the levity of those who make light of their opportunities; who hear the continual call to redeem the time, but take no note of it. Early life is so full of possibilities that in youth we are apt to forget the great value of the chances which seem so infinite, but which really go from us and come back no more. We fling them away or pass them by in careless or prodigal fashion, and it is only in after years that we feel our loss, when we are hampered and hindered by the fruits of former folly. It is hard to learn by anything but experience how precious opportunities are, and yet if we trust to experience to teach us, the lesson is apt to come too late.

Again, in our early years especially we are apt to make light of our duties. Duty, indeed, is to the young

a hard word; its full meaning grows on men only by degrees. But it may be well to learn early to believe that there does come a time to some men when there is an attraction in the idea of duty as in the Cross of Christ, which is more powerful and more winning than any other that could be named. Gradually it sinks into the heart and takes possession of it, and becomes the chief guide of life; but at first we turn aside perhaps and make light of its calls. We know well, for instance, what is meant by the duty of prayer, the duty of obedience, the duty of work, the duty of cheerfulness, but every one can testify how slowly his heart rises to a full appreciation of all or any of these. Indeed, are we not all of us too apt to make light of them, and go on our own way?

And, moreover, let me warn you against making light of sinful habits; of all levity this is the worst. As age creeps upon us, we learn somehow to realize more clearly the pernicious nature of sin, we feel the burden and the weight of it upon the world, we are conscious of the repulsive and hateful nature of it, in a sense which nothing I suppose but experience can give to us. Whereas in youth it happens sometimes that men think little of poisoning their life with what they do not yet know to be ineradicable, and spreading evil around them, which they do not recognise as the devil's work. It is just possible that some of you in the levity of youth may

treat with contempt or neglect all such warnings as these, thinking it no great matter to pollute the springs of your own life, or, worse than all else, and most pernicious of all, to teach some young and guileless soul new lessons in bad ways. Yet these are Satan's instruments for spreading sin among men.

But besides these various forms of levity on which I have touched, there are other defects which may be called essentially childish.

There is, for instance, the selfishness which arises from want of reflection. In youth the mind is taken up with immediate impressions, the present has a stronger hold upon us than in later life, the sensations of the moment sink deeper; and thus we think too much of ourselves and too little of others, and duty to our neighbour is very apt to slip out of our life's plan.

And again, out of the many faults of human character which make our life imperfect, I may select one other as pre-eminently childish, and as being very prevalent among the young—the want of moral courage. There is probably no defect which is so universally despised in a society of boys as physical cowardice, and yet few, I imagine, more common than its moral counterpart. Many a one who fears no risk, and thinks little of pain, can be surprised into a falsehood or an equivocation at almost any moment. He would resent it as a lie if he were called a coward, and yet he is guilty of weaknesses

far more contemptible than any form of physical cowardice.

Many a one whose nerves are firm enough in the face of danger is weak as a child if exposed to mockery or ridicule, is a slave to what the world may think of him, and has no courage to stand alone. Yet who could be farther than such as he from our idea of Christian manliness?

To this crying fault of moral cowardice I venture to ascribe almost half the evils of every society. If wrong notions and bad tone become in any degree prevalent on any point, it is almost sure to be the effect of this weakness. For just observe how it arises for the most part. In every society of men I fear we must expect to find some bad elements, some who in spite of all warnings and all exhortations, and all better feelings, take their pleasure in wickedness. Of all such the worst or the boldest will attempt to persuade you that their views are the general views, and that every one thinks and acts as they do. To impose upon the timid they will ridicule truth and purity, and all finer feelings and instincts. And how is it that they succeed in making converts too often? Very often I fear it is because others have not the courage to speak out their contempt of them, or expose the things they hate. In such societies as ours, for instance, it is no very uncommon thing for boys to be taught by bad companions

that it would be mean and dishonourable to expose anything bad. And it happens, I fear, in every such society, sometimes, that this gospel is accepted by many who know in their hearts that it is altogether wrong; and not only so, but that they are sinning against their own souls and the souls of their companions by adopting any such code. Should there be any who are thus inclined, from these false notions, to screen any evil, or to seem to agree with it, in spite of their better impulses, let them remember that such acquiescence has its real root in timidity and cowardice, and that it is part of the work of Satan, leading men to their destruction. I pray on your behalf, and I trust not in vain, that this fault of moral cowardice, that selfishness, and levity, and all other childish sins, be put away from amongst us, and that we may grow through our common life here to something better than these. To put these away is to grow from children into men; men worthy to be called followers of Christ. But in all our growth there is one thing which should remain as it was at the first—the trusting, loving, guileless spirit.

It was this which won our Saviour's sympathy for little children; it is this which makes it possible for us to live happily together; and it is this which binds us to the Cross of Christ with an everlasting and a saving bond.

V.

MANLINESS.

Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.—1 Cor. xiv. 20.

One of the things most frequently said in favour of a life like ours is that it fosters and cultivates the manly virtues. On every side we hear it remarked that education in a large school produces a manly type of character. Self-dependence and confidence, courage, frankness, openness, these, men say, are the fruits which ought to grow, and which as a rule are found to grow, in a place like this.

In this atmosphere you are expected to imbibe a love for manly tastes and pursuits; something of an active, enduring, persevering spirit; something of a true contempt for effeminacy and indulgence, and torpid do-nothing idleness. The more sickly and morbid elements of character are purged out of men by the discipline of such a life as yours. And it will be well for us if it can be truly said of our life here that these things are amongst its fruits. And less than this ought not to be said, for I know not how we can claim to be a really good school

unless we may at least say this; and if we are not doing something to realize this type of Christian manliness, and to send out into the world those who come to us with a sound and true foundation for some such character, we do not deserve to exist at all.

But whatever we may be doing or have done hitherto, or are likely to do in the immediate future, we should at least remember what it is that may reasonably be expected of us. It is to those brought up as you who now hear me are or have been that the world looks for the type of the Christian gentleman; and this, therefore, is the standard by which you are bound to measure your daily course. It is to this standard you have to square your attitude and your being, your language, your habits, your purpose, and your ways, as you move about in our society day by day. And it is a sufficiently instructive question, as it ought to be a frequent one, in your self-examinations, whether all these can be made to fit with such a standard as this.

No doubt our education is of a kind which ought to produce some such result. So far the universal verdict is in the main correct. If rightly used your opportunities here are of a kind to make you men who will be stronger, braver, more self-reliant, more enduring, and more true than if you had been brought up under some other circumstances. And I pray God it may not be said of us that we exist for a great purpose which we have not fulfilled.

For it is indeed [illegible] justly said that [illegible] ness. And, [illegible] you to set before [illegible] spirit.

"Let us be [illegible]" [illegible] mislead us [illegible] religiously: [illegible] nay, I fear [illegible] lightly or [illegible] and a [illegible] ness." I [illegible] upon you [illegible] more earnest [illegible] injunctions [illegible] which I [illegible] Set this aim before [illegible] likely [illegible]

But while we [illegible] desire after [illegible] directions [illegible]

There is [illegible] like ours [illegible] and as generally [illegible] And there [illegible] lost from [illegible] all means. [illegible]

good end from the moment you come amongst us here as a little boy knowing nothing of school-life to the day when you leave us to go out into the world and take your place among men of full age.

And we all alike agree in almost all societies that manliness is one of the foundations of all true character. Whatever our exact notions may be as to the nature of the things which constitute this quality in us, we never attempt to persuade ourselves that the character of the gentleman is possible without it; and when we think of such matters we believe also that without it Christian perfection cannot be reached by us.

Indeed there is a universal agreement upon this point: we all confess with one voice that we must build up our character upon this foundation. We should take it as an absolute condemnation of any kind of training, teaching, or influence, if it fails in this respect.

Well, then, while we are on this subject, all saying that we must above all things be men, and all possessed by a real ambition to show ourselves men in some way or other, all very sensitive too on the point if any one doubts our manliness, let us not entirely forget that these prevalent and universal feelings, these aims and ambitions in which we all rival each other, are the very things in all our life which are most

easily distorted. It is astonishing how readily they become the slaves of wrong notions, and how they accommodate themselves to fashions and customs which are radically bad.

You are desirous, then, of being marked by a character for manliness; there is probably nothing else which sends such a glow of pleasure through your veins as the thought that your companions look upon you as noticeable for being manly; and you are rightly of opinion that the character of our school will be to a great extent determined for good or evil by the manly spirit which is prevalent among you or by the absence of such a spirit. I would have you, therefore, to be always free from all false and misguided notions on this subject, if it be possible. There are few individuals and few societies which do not make to themselves false gods of some shape or other, bowing themselves down to some fashion or custom which is essentially bad, or to some distortion of the good and the true. So in this matter of manliness among the rest, we are exposed to many chances of error.

There are many counterfeits of this fundamental virtue, many things which somehow get the stamp of manliness though having very little of the nature of it in them, being, in fact, base imitations. We feel, for instance, that firmness and strength are fundamental elements in the character of a man; but what have these to

do with the roughness and the coarseness which so often put themselves forward in their place? To be strong is to be manly, no doubt; and so it happens sometimes that you think the first step to this is to despise sensitive feeling and delicacy and refinement, as if these were signs of weakness. Hence we get rough ways and manners and habits in some who were born to better things; hence also sometimes comes downright cruelty in playing roughly with the purer feelings of a sensitive companion. Hence also in some societies we see roughness and coarseness of speech prevailing, as if that were somehow a mark of manliness, instead of being, as indeed it is, rather brutal than manly; hence too the silly and degrading habit of swearing, into which we find men fall in every rank of society, as if coarse expletives or foolish words could mark anything at all but the coarse or the foolish mind. In all these things I beg you not to be misled for a moment by any false fashion or guide. It is a simple and plain truth, and very easy to remember, that the only manliness which deserves the title, the only manliness which you can claim for yourselves without ultimate shame and hurt, is that which, while it is strong and true and brave in all things right, is also refined and delicate, tender, considerate, and reverent. Is it, I wonder, sufficiently remembered in all parts of such a society as ours, that the highly strung and sensitive organizations, the natures that vibrate at every touch, and

feel with feelings undreamt of by those of rougher grain, are in some respects the very highest and most precious products of the human race?

If then you have any real ambition to grow into men of an honourable type, do not suppose that you will thus grow by hardening your nature into roughness, or by following any example or any fashion of spurious manliness. It is to the youngest especially I would say this. You are very ready to imitate the fashions and ways of your elder companions, and you are very likely to catch at the wrong things. Some of you probably are only too ready to imitate the worst of what you see or hear, and to forget or fling from you the lessons of modesty and tenderness, of reverence and humility, which you have learned in your home or from your masters. Let me urge you to-day to make it rather your ambition to nurse all the lessons of goodness and love and purity which from infancy you have been learning; for it is out of these that manliness of character grows, and out of no other sort than these. Very happy is the man who, when he looks back on his boyhood, can say that he passed through it from first to last without losing his childlike tenderness and purity and innocence. Do you wish to show your strength, your firmness, in fact your manliness? then show it by persistently acting on the Divine command to keep your tongue from all evil, and your lips that they speak no guile, and your life pure,

and blameless. What many boys consider a manly course when they are first plunged into the life of school is in fact and in reality anything but a brave course, if they only considered it; for it is just following some strong and rough companion, perhaps, or some prevalent fashion, against what they feel and believe and know to be the right and the true.

When you think for a moment of your life in regard to these matters of roughness and coarseness of manner or speech, or of your disregard of the better and finer feelings in yourselves and in others, or the vulgar habit of oaths or foolish talk, how many of you can say that your ways are altogether free from that of which you really feel ashamed? and yet unless we are striving to keep ourselves free from all such things what is to be the fruit and what the end? Assuredly out of these you can get no honourable name, no satisfactory future either for your school as a society or for your own individual life. Does it happen that our school has something of a name that is honourable? Then be assured it is in spite of any such things if they exist anywhere amongst us, and not because of them; it is in spite of all who spoil their life for any base or foolish ends, and certainly not because of them. These are spots and blemishes. Let us take care that they be few and small, and that we do not contribute to them.

Again, we all look upon truth and fidelity, and what we term honour, as chief among the elements of a manly character; we all feel that it would be a real disgrace to us if it could be truly said that we fail in respect of these. We are very sensitive of our good name in regard to this, and it is well, it is essential, that we should be so; it would be a bad sign in any society were this not the case. Well then, what have we to say to our practice in carrying out this feeling? We are ambitious, no doubt, of a character for true and honourable dealing, individually and as a society. Let us be sure, therefore, that we adopt no crooked rules in regard to this. It happens sometimes in societies which claim to be united by bonds of honour, and it may happen here, that distorted fashions and customs and low notions spread themselves concerning the fair and the upright and the honourable.

In many trades it happens, and we have reason to fear in some professions, that modes of dealing which any individual, if acting by himself, would feel to be dishonourable and disgraceful, are adopted and acquiesced in by whole classes who still fancy themselves honest men. Each individual acts as the rest do, because, as he says, all others act so; and thus it is that men go in company down the hill of crooked dealing where they would not go alone, and so the laws of God are broken. And thus also it may happen sometimes with us as with others that distorted views about plain dealing

spread themselves. We know, for instance, how the notion spreads sometimes that to deceive a master is not exactly mean or base, that to do particular kinds of work in underhand or forbidden ways is not exactly dishonest; sometimes it happens that those who are quite honest themselves will connive at and tolerate and screen such dishonesty in others, and will thus in their timidity or misplaced good-nature or laxity allow the fountain of honour to be polluted all around them, though they would not pollute it first by any act of their own, and still they claim to be living a perfectly honourable life, but surely with a strange and melancholy inconsistency.

And yet again we candidates for the stamp of manliness to be written upon our character and life are liable to go wrong in many other ways. Sometimes we allow ourselves to think that it is manly and fine to affect a carelessness of religious duty and a kind of scorn for serious behaviour; or we think it manly to join in mocking at the scruples felt by some one who is really braver and better than ourselves as to high principle, or honesty, or purity, or reverence. Sometimes it may even happen that we join with the spiteful or the cowardly in heaping some obloquy on one who has dared to be brave and true and honest or kind. Sometimes possibly we profess familiarity with evil, as if that were a thing for pride instead of shame, and we forget in our folly

that knowledge of evil may no doubt be the boast of devils, but that it is the curse of men.

Nay, let us cling with all our strength to the Divine instinct in us that bids us strive after a manly and honourable name; but let us be very careful that we follow no false guides in so important a matter, and that we adopt no crooked rules.

The worst thing we can do for our life is to distort the best elements in it, and this desire after manliness which fires and stirs our early years is one of the very best. Let us handle it then as a holy thing, and one which we should present at the last pure and undefiled to Him Who planted it within us.

The rule of St. Paul which he gives us in my text is one which we should take as a golden rule in this matter—that as regards all evil we should still be children even to the end, innocent of it, that is, untainted by it, and guileless, but that in understanding we should be men. It is by this rule that we have to strive to make good our title to manliness and honour. And acting on this let us by all means be jealous of such a title with a watchful and sleepless jealousy. But surely we must remember that it is presumptuous and foolish mockery to claim as our own any such honourable name, if in habit or in life, in word or deed, in light or darkness, we are soiling it with any ignoble use.

"Many shall come in My Name," said our Saviour,

"and shall say unto you, I am Christ;" and the same is the case with every virtue. Counterfeits spring up on every side, crying unto us that they are the true and the veritable, and enticing us with specious words; and some men follow them to their grievous hurt, and some perhaps to their ruin.

And yet it is not that we are without a guide, or that we are wandering in dark places; but it is, I fear, very often because we will not listen to the voice of the Son of God, or to the Spirit which He has planted in our hearts.

May the grace be given us to follow faithfully from our earliest youth the Divine voices, which are never silent; and thus may we grow to that true, that sole manliness, which means the likeness to Him Who being God was made man for our sakes; made like unto us in all things, excepting only that He was without sin.

VI.

LENTEN OBSERVANCE, OR THE NEED OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE.

I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.— 1 CORINTHIANS ix. 27.

THIS text reminds us of the severe and incessant discipline which St. Paul imposed upon himself. And were it not for the many expressions of this kind by which he has admitted us to see something of the struggle that went on in his heart, we should be apt to forget how much it costs to produce such a character as that of this apostle.

We contemplate his zeal, his faith, his self-denial, and his devotion, all those marvellous gifts which make him so great in our sight. We see a man rising above the stature of his fellows; we are stirred very likely to wonder, or it may be some of us to enthusiasm, when we think of that life so lavish of its energies in the service of Christ, so near to the Christian ideal in purity, in unselfishness, in love, and it hardly strikes us to consider how many sore and uphill struggles there

must have been before the bloom and the fruit of such a life as this came to the perfection in which we see it. It is good for us that we should now and then get a glimpse at least, if it be nothing more, of the fears that beset such a man, of the prayers, watchings, and strivings on which such perfection was built up. And these he himself gives us in many passages. To attempt to know more than what is indicated by his own words, to endeavour to pry into what passed behind the veil in the secrets of his heart, would be idle and vain; but we should attempt to make this fact our own, for instruction and for imitation, that he rose to be so much better than we are because he strove with so much more earnestness. In him we see, no doubt, a man filled with the Spirit of God, and powerfully moved by Divine impulses, and we may be tempted to think that if we could only be so inspired by some supernatural afflatus, such a life as his would be possible if not easy to us also, as it was to him; and so we resign ourselves to spiritual sloth, and deceive our hearts with false views about Divine help. Instead of this, however, let us remember that St. Paul had to work out his own salvation even as we have, that he had to build up his noble character of the greatest apostle out of the very same earthly material that is given to you and to me for our Christian life, and that he had to go through the whole conflict with sin just like one of us. Indeed, if we con-

sider it, we shall feel, I think, that one great source of his strength and elevation of character was his continual consciousness of danger and weakness, his continual sense of the power of sin, and his abhorrence of it which drew him ever closer to the Saviour, and made him not only ready but eager to practise all discipline that might bring him nearer to his ideal of life. Now it is this part of St. Paul's character which affects us most closely at this time, for it affords us a lesson peculiarly applicable to the season of Lent, which if it is anything at all to us, is a season of spiritual discipline. Do we, then, feel that this season shows us anything of that spirit of St. Paul as existing in our own life? Is there any desire to exercise ourselves in those things which tend to godliness, and bring us nearer to Christ?

We have now fairly entered into this season, and we ought to be able to answer such a question. We must be fully aware whether it is making any difference to us or not; we must know whether there is anything in our life to mark that this is a special time with us.

I do not say that this ought necessarily to be so, or that Lenten observances are absolutely essential to a lively faith; for this cannot be said of anything which is merely ceremonial, or is in fact only a matter of discipline. The ceremony is nothing in itself, but derives its value from its effect upon our life; we estimate it entirely by what experience shows to be its

spiritual worth, and not at all by any standard of internal virtue which may be supposed to reside in it. In considering these things we do not lose sight of the cardinal truth that it is by faith we are saved; in other words, by spiritual elevation, by purity, by holiness, and all the exercises of special times and seasons are simply stepping-stones to this high end. If, therefore, as we believe, every man is free to work out his own salvation according to the lights which God has given him, he is free also to adopt or neglect these helps to a spiritual life. The law on which they rest is the law of Christian expediency, and not of any higher necessity; for the spiritual authority under which men live is that which speaks to them through their own conscience. It is to his own master that every one stands or falls, and to no other. This is what we mean by Christian freedom; this is that perfect law of liberty which St. Paul preached as the highest rule of Christian life.

But does any one suppose that this liberty is unconditioned? Does any one imagine that it means liberty to live a life of indifference and follow his own devices to-day, leaving repentance without fear to some more convenient season? or does it suggest to any of you that perhaps you may be saved without all this care and watchfulness which was once thought necessary, and that these things are but part of an ancient superstition which you can afford to neglect?

I have little fear that these suppositions and suggestions will present themselves to your minds in so many words, or that if they did you would answer them in any but the right way; but you may without knowing it yield to all these, and drift into some such abuse of the freedom you possess; for the temptations will be sure to come to you in some specious and subtle form, and you may drink them in like a poisoned atmosphere, unconscious of their deadly elements.

We find ourselves face to face with a time-honoured rule that this season of Lent should be kept by us as a season of fasting and prayer, of self-examination, of special discipline for our soul's good; and we find that the observance of it, which in some Churches is made an act of obligation, is left amongst us to each man's own conscience. We may make it different from other times, or we may treat it as nothing at all; we have our choice. We feel perhaps that the ancient rule of abstinence from meats and affliction of the body has for us no spiritual significance, that it does not help us to any better life; and so we are apt to go on from this, and say that observance of such seasons is only a relic of the past, and that the wants of our age, with its more spiritual views of religion, are not such as these will satisfy; and so we slip easily into a general neglect of all such exercises, beguiling ourselves with some hazy fancy that our religion should pervade our

whole life, and not merely a special portion of it, which is true enough in itself, but very misleading when used as an argument for neglect of religious helps or safeguards. For this is the very reason of all others why we should make it our special care at particular times. We cannot expect a plant so delicate as a pure spiritual life to grow of itself unwatered and uncared for, or even to grow with only some stinting and haphazard attention.

No doubt there have been times when it was necessary to warn men against supposing that these periods of discipline and repentance, with the prayer and fasting which were enjoined for them, possessed some remarkable virtue which would atone for laxity at other seasons; but this is not our danger.

It is not the general fashion of our day to overrate such stated exercises. Every one would acknowledge, I think, that the modern tendency of spiritual life among educated men is on the whole to retire inwards. The feelings of the heart are more and more locked up in the heart, and do not crave as once they did for some outward ceremonial expression. The days of sackcloth and ashes and beating of the breast are gone irrevocably, and it would be simple folly to lament that they are gone; any attempt to revive an obsolete form of worship or discipline which meets and satisfies no generally felt want is deservedly counted as a foolish anachronism.

Our religious observances naturally assume new forms to meet the changing feelings and wants of advancing civilization; but let us take care that in letting go the anchor of ancient forms we do not drift away to where the spiritual life cannot survive in us. The soul still cries out for seasons of prayer and penitence and godly discipline, and he is a bold or thoughtless or presumptuous man who ventures to let seasons established for these ends go past him unused, and does not grasp at such opportunities for freeing his spirit from the overpowering influences of the sensuous life. If you care nothing for these times, the chances are that your life is running astray from communion with God. If you feel nothing of the burden of sin, no desire to humble yourselves before God and to draw nearer to Him; if you are troubled with no consciousness of elements in your nature that require to be mastered and subdued, it would seem as if you knew but little yet of what a Christian's life must be. If your life is disturbed by none of these things, but runs on its regular course without any such spiritual trials or wants to interfere with its thoughtless peace, then no doubt Lent, and its solemnity and seriousness, its self-denial and prayer, will be a mere name to you, and can have no attraction, no value in your eyes. But so too in such a case will it be with Easter when it comes, so with all things that belong to the spirit; and the end of a life which thus

has no part or lot in things spiritual can only be that darkness closes over it. But it is far more likely that you feel in many ways a real need of such help as Lent has to give; your spirit struggles with the flesh in many a secret yearning or misgiving; it cries for help and strength in many a voice which is never heard beyond the depths of your own heart. And the observances of holy seasons come as the answer to such cries.

Is there no neglected duty which has caused you to feel that you are going wrong? Is there no secret sin that has begun to lay its strong hand upon you? Is there no forgotten prayer which reminds you of a time when you were better than now? Is there no evil or impure thought which has begun to lurk in your heart? If you are conscious of any such blot in your life, then you have a call from God to use this season of Lent and not let it go unimproved. Take up again that neglected duty, drive out that secret sin, renew again that habit of prayer, and flee from the impure thought. Such are the pleadings with which this season of penitence comes laden. And in any case, if you love your soul's health, do something to mark these weeks. Let your Bible be read at some special time, draw near to God in some special prayer, and you will soon find that such exercises are His gift to bring us closer to His presence and to feed us with new life.

VII.

CHRIST WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.—ST. LUKE xix. 41, 42.

WE can all in some degree understand this weeping of the Saviour over the doomed city. Feeling as He did how the cloud was gathering over her, hearing the distant tread of the army of destruction, the shouts and hosannas of the crowd rejoicing around Him might well stir Him to sorrowful thoughts. We know well enough that to those who look before and after, all the sounds of momentary gladness are often drowned by the sad undertone of an ironical destiny. And so with Christ at that sole moment of earthly triumph. When the magnificence of the city and the temple, with their beautiful framework of gardens and oliveyards, walls and watch-towers, suddenly burst upon His sight, it seems as if He did not see their beauty. Just as it may be that through that echoing music of human voices crying Hosanna and paying due honour to Him, He heard rather the savage cry of "Crucify Him!" which was soon to take its

place; so it was not the Jerusalem lying in the sunlight before His feet which fixed His thoughts at that moment. It was the Jerusalem which had stoned God's messengers, and rejected every message; it was the city which had been unable or unwilling to read the lessons of lawgivers, poets, and prophets; the city travelling unconsciously the downward path to the cruel day of inevitable destruction, which He saw in a vision before Him. As He saw it also in the temple when He cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" As He saw it yet again in the midst of the crowd that was following Him to Calvary, when He said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children;" so now His soul was filled with the vision of the city sinking under the fate which she had chosen should be hers, and He wept over her.

I said that we can well understand this weeping, for indeed there are few things sadder than this to dwell on, the thought of what might have been otherwise, but is now unchangeable. Have any of us gone far in life's journey without having picked up some such companion-thoughts whose presence will sadden us at intervals during all the rest of it? We can think of a time when there were possibilities for us which we know are

possibilities no longer, we came to turning-points and took the wrong turning, and we cannot go back again.

If we have one such memory from our individual experience we require no interpreter to tell us the meaning of passages like this in our Saviour's life.

We follow the course of Jerusalem's history and we can see how true the vision was. She had had her day of many opportunities and innumerable voices, the last hour of which was slipping away from her when these words were uttered.

And what is thus seen to have been true of that city and nation, what is true of all nations and all Churches, is in the same sense true of us. The lesson applies to you and me. The mercies of God are infinite, no doubt, and the depth of His love passes our understanding; but shall we therefore shut our eyes to the plain lessons which He gives us to read on every page of history, and at every step of our own individual life?

Humanly speaking we know that there is a natural order in these things, which we read unmistakably. When we speak the language of truth and soberness, when we use the words which our daily experience prompts us to use, and which we use in other matters, we have to say that our day of grace has its limits; and there is a sense in which those limits are narrower than life, in which they are narrowing every day, if we are living with blind eyes and with our spirit clouded over.

On the one side it is true that our life is an endless stream of new circumstances and new opportunities, and that God is always inviting us to come to Him; yet on the other we are warned that we should not mock Him by neglecting the voices that are calling to us to-day, but may possibly be dumb to-morrow. It is beyond all question that our life is one continuous whole, and that our future is built upon the foundations of the past and present. It is equally certain that though we sometimes go on through a long and quiet period hardly conscious of any change, we are still changing for all that, moulding our life little by little into a new type of character, for better or worse; new desires and tastes, new likes and dislikes, new tempers, new habits, are weaving themselves silently into the fibre of our being, and so it happens sometimes that our eyes close gradually to the things which belong unto our peace, and the day is gone before we know it. It is a warning against any such course as this which I wish you to draw from those words of the Saviour.

Let us remember from what He says here of Jerusalem, and what He may be saying even now of some of us—"If thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes"—that He deals with us according as we use our opportunities. He is very merciful and longsuffering and of great kindness, strong and patient, though we provoke Him

every day. Let us by all means remember this, that we may come to Him in prayer without fear or hesitation, and that we should never presume to say of our neighbour that his day of grace is ended, and should never give up our own struggle in despair, saying that God has turned His back upon us. But while we contemplate His mercy and love, while we cling to them as neverfailing, it is folly to shut our eyes to the action of His unresting laws. Christ may weep over the doomed city with the sincerest compassion, even in His own death-agony He may cry, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," but all this does not turn aside the natural results of men's doings: "Thy house is left unto thee desolate." We should not presume to deal with Divine things, and look only upon one side of them. It is by doing this that men frame for themselves misleading systems of false theology, and buoy themselves up with personal hopes that lead only to disappointment.

What, then, is the meaning of these words about knowing the things which belong to our peace?

In the first place, surely they bid us consider how unspeakably important are the years of early life, because such years, above all others, are the time of Divine visitation. It is during these early years through which most of you are now passing that you very likely root in your soul those influences and tendencies which will do more than anything else to work out your salvation or your

ruin. Week by week your mind is acquiring its tone, your desires and habits are fixing themselves in your life, or as we may say in other words, your nature is being stamped in lines which grow daily deeper with what we call its growing character. And what does all this mean in the language of the Bible, but that either the grace of God is making of you a new creature, or else that your spiritual eye is growing dimmer, and the downward road on which you have let your moral nature begin its course is growing steeper and more slippery, and you are drawing nearer to that point beyond which recovery will be almost impossible. When I deal with full-grown men and women I feel that the work of their life is already half done; but when I turn to your young life my feeling is rather that as yet nothing is finished, but all things are possible. The way is still open, because no habit is indurated, no passion has eaten the vitality out of you, no bad experience has trodden down your soul into impenetrable hardness. And all things being thus possible everything is of infinite value. Thus my responsibility to you is all the heavier for all that I do or say which may affect your life; thus also is there a heavier duty laid on every master who has any dealings with you, on every friend who has any share in your rearing; and thus, too, is your own responsibility to one another great beyond description, lest by any means you should cause a young life which is grow-

ing beside you to take the downward bent, from which it may never recover again.

But further, if we believe that there may come a time when in some sense or other the things that belong to our peace shall be hid from our eyes, we believe that there are critical seasons in our life which constitute fatal or saving turning-points. At the moment, when we are in the midst of our life's course, we can seldom say how critical any event may be, or how great its influence on our later years. These lessons we can read after the event, but not always at the time. Thus much, however, when we read them in the after light of their consequences, we very often find, that what seemed trivial things, small neglects, it may be, or small sins, or small beginnings, turn out to have been things of most serious moment to us, fraught with endless consequences.

And the warning we draw from this is obvious enough, that we should be careful in all things. If it be so, that we cannot tell how influential any act or habit may prove upon our life, surely we ought to be all the more watchful. We should avoid all the approaches to the downward course. We should believe that in every temptation which besets us, every evil habit which may be in danger of gaining a hold upon us, every deflection which may be leading us ever so little out of the straight path, heaven and hell may be

at stake. We should believe this, because in fact it may be so, since we never know how far any single sin may lead us. We are tempted to do something which a voice tells us is sin; and we delude ourselves, perhaps, by answering that it is but a little one, or that it is only for this once. To all this it has been well said as a warning, that "a little sin may grow to a great bad habit, and a great bad habit may kill both body and soul in hell." Should you fancy any sort of sin to be a trivial matter, it may be well for you to remember the proverbial warning that the devil fishes with a fine line, and that he does not let you see his hook. Let us therefore be watchful over ourselves.

And moreover, we are not altogether ignorant, any of us, of the importance of these things. We know, when we stop to think of it, how a single act may help to alter our whole life; how if you mix once in bad company you may become entangled in it, till you sink down to the level of it; how if once you do an act of dishonesty, or indolence, or folly, the savour of it hangs about you, and similar temptations seem to feed upon it. You have drunk a poison. Or how if you give way once to some impure thought or solicitation, it seems as though you had broken down some protecting wall, and you are no longer the same creature. There is a truth in all this which is only too terrible; so let us recognise and learn its lesson, and beware of every approach to sin. "Easy," said

the Roman poet, "is the descent unto Avernus, night and day the gates of gloomy Dis are standing open; but to trace back your steps and come again to the upper air, here is the stress of labour." Let us apply his lesson to our moral life, and we find it in exact accordance with our Saviour's teaching, and with all that our own experience tells us. In fact, it is our business to judge ourselves in these matters, and so judging we are in no doubt. I know that if I were to do some things, or give way once only to some sins, my life would be a different thing from that time. Every man knows it. And that knowledge is only a voice which warns you unmistakably how it is possible for you to sell your soul to Satan.

While we feel these things, and are warned by them our eyes are still open to the things which belong unto our peace, and all good things are possible for us. Our danger is when we sink into blindness, into carelessness, into dulness; when we forget our watchfulness, when we give up our prayers, when conceit or hardness takes the place of humility, and trust in God.

Would you know what are the signs that we, perhaps, may be beginning to sink under the doom of Jerusalem? These signs are to be found in common things. It is self-examination, remember, to which I am inviting you. Have you any fear of that dark time when God may possibly leave you alone? If so, beware of all beginnings

which seem to point to that gloomy ending. And such beginnings are not difficult to spell out. Does it happen to us to be growing colder or harder in spirit? Are the habit and attitude of prayer leaving us? Is our conscience duller, or its voice weaker in respect of anything? Do we dally with any temptation from which formerly we should have shrunk with dislike? Have we trodden any scruples about sin under foot so that we feel them no longer? Do we listen carelessly to warning voices which once moved us? Here are questions enough, and all touching upon our daily life; and if to any one of them we are obliged to answer, Yes, it is so with us, in that respect we are beginning the fatal descent, and the voice of warning does not come before we need it.

From all this, then, let us draw the one needful lesson of prayer and watchfulness, learning, on the one hand, never to think any sin of slight moment because it seems a small one, for it may be as the letting out of great waters; and on the other hand, learning that the first condition of all sure growth, moral or spiritual, is the humble and prayerful spirit, which keeps us near to Christ in our feelings and aspirations, and the windows of heaven open above us.

VIII.

CHRIST BEARING HIS CROSS.

And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.—JOHN xix. 17, 18.

HERE we have the simple narrative of that sacrifice which has become the centre of all our worship, and which the whole Christian world is contemplating to-day as the crowning event in the spiritual history of mankind. Viewed historically, or with the eye of a contemporary, that crucifixion was an obscure and insignificant event, just one more bitter death added on to an unrecorded multitude of other deaths, a drop in the great ocean of man's cruelty to his brother, attracting scarcely a word of notice, making no particular mark upon the life of the time; for indeed why should any one notice particularly one more cross of suffering outside a provincial city of the Roman Empire? There they crucified Him, and as it happened, two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst; who could have expected to hear anything further of one dying under such circumstances, the death of the slave and the

malefactor? Yet you see, somehow, by some mysterious power, that Cross has proved to be very different from the rest which were standing around it, as others were standing in their ghastly hideousness all about in every province of the great empire. We should remember this obscurity of the Saviour's death, or we do not learn all its lesson; we should remember how His Cross was only one of a great crowd. When we listen to His agonizing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" we hear in it, not a solitary voice crying to a listening universe, or by itself to the God of heaven, but only the greatest cry of a great chorus of agony, going up to the same God from many a similar cross; a chorus sometimes inarticulate, no doubt, sometimes not of prayer but of cursing or blank despair; but yet there was one thing common to all the voices—they were the sad lament of human suffering, of sin and death.

And amidst all this the Cross of Christ was to the ordinary observer in no way conspicuous. But then we come to the marvel of it. This Cross, so like its ghastly companions, the Cross of an obscure Galilean—a despised Nazarene—between two chance malefactors, this, you see, has cast its shadow, and has carried the great light which burns so bright behind the shadow over all the wide world. And it is a different world in consequence; it cannot any more be what it was before

the day of that sacrifice. The wonder of it began to be felt when the rude soldiers, who were doing their task of watching before it, were struck with awe and fear. "Truly," said one of them, "this was the Son of God." It sank deeper when men began to whisper that the tomb was empty; and the Ascension set the seal to this supreme act of suffering, and the reign of the Cross was begun.

And on this day, naturally, the thought of it rises before us with overpowering distinctness; on every side we seem to hear nothing but this one word, and to see nothing but this one shape. This symbol which has sunk so deep into the minds of men as the mark of all suffering and sadness, is held up to our view so prominently—so placarded before us, as St. Paul has it—in the services and memories of this season, that we must be very dull indeed if we are not stirred and solemnized. When all men's thoughts are thus fixed upon it, when we not only feel it as the centre of our own penitence, prayers, and aspirations, but when we feel too that we are only one of the universal company which is gathering now from every quarter for this adoration of the Lamb that was slain for us, it can be no exaggeration to say that there seems to float as in the air of this period a sense of the sorrow and mystery of this cardinal event in God's dealings with man, the memory of which all the Christian world is cherishing to-day, and to which in all

our time of trial and conflict we look back with a natural longing as the source of comfort and hope.

Men reason about this mystery of the Atonement, once made, by the sacrifice of the Son of God; they dwell upon the necessity of this sacrifice, they develop in the language of the schools the causes and the motives which, as they tell us, led to it. Thus men argue and dispute about the Cross of Christ, thus they even quarrel over it; but withal they cannot carry us beyond the sense of a mystery which we have not fathomed, and assuredly they bring to us out of it nothing better than that feeling of love and gratitude to Him who died there with which the very simplest aspect of His death inspires us.

We are all capable of understanding how great and good a thing it is for one to have given himself freely out of pure love for the salvation of others; this tender, this answering spring of love and gratitude, is the meeting-point of the human and the Divine. Who will give himself for his friend, condemning himself, and ignoring desertion, scorn, and death, incurring such self-chosen sacrifice? It was more than this which Christ did for us, finishing it as on this day, and our instinct declares that of all things in earth or heaven we can conceive none greater, nobler, or worthier of all admiration and honour than such self-sacrifice. But why it should have been necessary in the plan of Providence for Christ thus to bear our sins upon the tree we shall

gain little by inquiring. Such inquiries are apt to carry us beyond the range of human faculties.

Men reason concerning the Cross of Christ as they stand afar off, and they feel none of its power; but not so when they come close, and stand before it; not so when they listen to the witness of the heart, and kneel at the foot of it; not so when they are in its very presence, as we are now. At such times the spiritual feelings vindicate the excellence and the saving power of this sacrifice, before which pure reason may very well be baffled. At such times the humble mind is content with feeling in it the assurance of Divine love in that the Son thus emptied Himself of His Godhead and became of no reputation for us, and drank the dregs of human suffering that we through Him might inherit a new life.

Turning thus to the Cross of Christ, we find it the source of hope and peace to us; it sanctifies our own trials and sufferings; it casts a new halo over every sorrow. "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me."

Suffering, we know, is inseparable from humanity, so that Christ in taking man's nature became liable to the sufferings which the sins of men have brought upon the race of men. Thus, without sin Himself, He suffered for our sins, and sanctified all suffering, divinely borne, by the example of His great humility.

And this may suggest various thoughts to us.

Just as He bore His Cross, made thus heavy by the sins of the whole race, so must every one, in some degree, bear a cross of the same pattern, suffering, the just for the unjust. Sin has made itself laws in the world; it has laid its blighting touch on every part of man's nature, and it rules amongst us as a sovereign. Everywhere in its train has come suffering; everywhere it sows this as its natural seed, and we have all to eat of the bitter fruit.

As the Son of Man above all others suffered and died, the great Victim of this law of vicarious sacrifice, so too each of us in his turn and in his degree must bear a part of this penalty which the sins of generations have laid upon us, and to which we all, I fear, as Christ did not, add the burden of our own sins.

Children suffer for the sins of parents, and parents are grieved by the sins of children, and every one of us who transgresses the law of God is heaping up suffering, not only for himself, but for some one who has no share in his sin, some one innocent of his transgression. The fathers eat the sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. Thus a portion of the curse of every sin is borne by those who have not transgressed in the matter, and all such sufferers are bearing something of the Cross of Christ.

When a father's heart is pierced with grief for the sin or ingratitude of the child whom he loves more

than all else in the world; when a mother prays, and prays in vain, that her son may be saved from the sinful ways to which he still yields himself a slave; when friend strives for friend, and meets only with misunderstanding, and estrangement—in all such cases, and in numberless others, there is felt something of the burden of Christ's Cross.

It may help us to a more vital sympathy with the memories of this sacred day thus to remember how like Christ's sufferings were to some of ours, and how, though we cannot feel His sorrow in its depth or intensity or unspeakable agony, we still feel something of the shadow of it when we suffer for the wrongdoing of another, when our hearts are torn by the thought or the effects of sins which the world has laid upon us from no fault of our own.

Let us remember, however, that a great deal of our suffering is of a different origin. The Cross of Christ was not the only one which stood on Calvary: of two others at any rate we know something.

In one sense, no doubt, it stood there alone. There is nothing to be set beside it when we think of it as the source from which a new power was to flow out over the life of the world; when we consider the effects of that one Sacrifice, or the feelings and the hopes which are bound inseparably to this Cross, it stands altogether alone. But as a practical lesson it may be well for us not entirely to overlook those two others which stood there

also. "They crucified Him, and two other with Him, on either side one;" and one, we read, mocked and reviled Him with the multitude, but one, confessing that he received there a just reward for his deeds, was melted to penitence and prayer.

Thus we may see how penitence and condemnation are found on either side of the Cross of sacrifice. Which of these is our cross to be? for in these we have before us our own possible relations to the kingdom of heaven. The Cross of Christ Himself, of Him Who suffers for the sin of others, has no doubt to be borne by all of us at times; but far more frequently our crosses are those which our own sins have made, and these we turn, some of us, into crosses of penitence, some into the cross of condemnation.

Like the impenitent malefactor, how often do men receive the just reward of their doings, how often they hear the Divine voice close at their side, and uttering Divine accents, whilst they repine under the suffering which they know that they deserve, and turn a deaf ear, or answer back reviling, "to the voice which comes to them as the voice of God"! We ought, in fact, to thank God that it is not allowed us to go on sinning without the warning which comes to us in crosses and trials, or in the bitter effects of our sin.

The pricks of conscience, the inward misgivings, the regrets and the remorse which are the unfailing atten-

dants of a sinful life, are as messengers sent to warn us away from the precipice of ruin and death to which sin would lead us.

But it happens very often that we will not hear their warnings. They make us sullen or dissatisfied, but not repentant. Men thus refuse to see the love which is hidden in the punishment which their sin lays upon them. They have to bear the pain, for there is no escaping that; they even add to it by their own rebellious spirit, but the blessing which was hidden in it they miss entirely, and turn that which was meant as a means of healing into an instrument of deeper condemnation. So it happens that some men choose the lot of him who died on Calvary reviling.

But in the other cross, on which the penitent was hanging, we see a cross of instruction for all of us, and it may be a pattern to some. Very likely it may happen to some of us, as to him, that what brings us into the company of Christ is our sin and its penalty; for some men are only too apt to forget all about God and Christ till the bitter dregs of some sin begin to turn them in their suffering and in their need to Him Whom we always recognise in such a case as the Great Physician of our souls.

I pray God, above all, that, if possible, your life may be unstained and unpolluted, and may thus retain something of that unsullied holiness which, once lost, is never recovered again, and which forms part of the rare beauty

of His life, Who, suffering for our sins, Himself knew no sin; but if that happiness may not be yours, then I pray that you may at any rate escape, as all men do not, the dull and hardened spirit of the cynic or the reviler, impervious and impenitent.

When the hand of God lies heavy on us, when we are bowed down under the crosses with which our sins have burdened us, when we feel our folly and hate our sin, then let us remember that we have come to the moment which was intended for our salvation; then we are brought very near to the Cross of Christ, and we may hear His voice speaking peace unto us if we will only attend with listening ear: "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me."

IX.

CHRIST SACRIFICING HIMSELF FOR US.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—ST. JOHN iii. 16.

OUT of the many thoughts that naturally arise on this day I cannot do more than select one or two of the most prominent, and ask you to carry them with you as your companions for a little while.

As we stand by the empty grave of our crucified Lord; as we read of the strange figure sitting where He was laid so lately, and hear the voice saying, "He is not here, but is risen," many thoughts and many feelings must contend within us if we have learned to dwell at all upon the mysteries of the Saviour's life and death as things of personal interest to us. On the one side there rise difficult questions, which we may possibly feel ourselves incompetent to answer. The life and work of Christ may well be counted too great to be summed up and comprehended in any human theory or explanation. Were it otherwise, we might feel it as some have felt it, a subject of deep sorrow

that the one thing in Christianity on which men still differ most widely is, as it has ever been, the principal thing of all, what is the nature, and what the cause, of the sacrifice of Christ. But if we have been impressed by the power of His life, and feel at all the vastness of the work which He came to do, we shall understand that the essence of true Christian knowledge is not to be found in the solution of a few hard questions, but in the influence which the name of Christ exercises over our hearts. If we have learned to take up our cross and follow Him; if we have learned to strive after His meekness, His purity, and His love, and to be moved by the spirit which moved Him in His life and His death, then we have learned the true lesson of the Incarnation and Atonement, for thus we have learned to see and feel it as a life-giving, transforming, sanctifying influence, in fact, "the power of God unto salvation."

As a matter of knowledge, however, there are some things which it is good for us to remember. In the first place, we have to notice how the life of Christ brings God nearer to us. All other experience has shown clearly enough by an endless series of error that men cannot by searching find out the Highest. Else why should the world have remained so entirely wanting in types that could be compared with Christ, or so unfruitful in religions capable of satisfying the soul of civilized man? What is it, then, that the mani-

festation of the Son of God did for us? See what it was that required to be done as one chief element in His enlightening work. Ancient religions failed from want of any standard sufficiently superhuman to be free from human error, and yet sufficiently human to be of the level of human life. The Jews' conception of God failed and was imperfect, because though God stands there as a Father, great and good and of tender mercy, He stands high above and far off. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, though righteousness and judgment be the habitation of His seat. It is in the life of Christ, and there only, that we have the Divine and the human linked together; and so through Him we can feel, as we can feel from no other teaching or experience, that heaven is at once above us and very near to us, requiring holiness and truth and purity of those who would enter there, and yet capable of being reached by every human soul that follows Christ. What the Greeks tell us that Socrates did for the moral life of men Jesus of Nazareth has done for the spirit. As Socrates made philosophy a thing of the market-place for all men to share in, so the Saviour made it plain that the Godhead is not far from every one of us, and that our life as it grows nearer to Christ is growing to the likeness of the Divine and everlasting. And let us remember in all our thoughts about Him that the world has seen nothing like Him. History has no one with whom to compare Him, and yet

He is not strange to any of us. So unlike all others that we feel in all our contact with Him His difference, His separateness, His superiority, His perfection, in fact, His Divinity; and yet so intimately human, such a type and pattern of human love and devotion, so full of human feeling and sympathy, and so laden with human suffering, that we feel all the while as close to Him as to our neighbour and friend. And if all this be so, and we feel it to be so in a thousand ways as we learn to live with Christ in the Gospel story, or as we cling to Him in our secret life, as we surrender our souls to the new doctrine which He sets before us, what further witness do we need that we too are the sons of God, and that there is no barrier between us and the heaven above, excepting such as our sins are making? And we feel, too, that the heavenward way is easy to see before us if our eyes are not blinded by sinful habit, and that to travel it is the one only thing which can satisfy the human soul, though we must expect it to be for us as it was for Him, a thorny and a suffering way.

And this brings me to another aspect of His life and death which it is necessary to keep in mind. The question which rises, I suppose, in the thoughts of almost every one at some time or other as perhaps the most perplexing of all, certainly a question which has led to strange answers, is, How was it that He, the innocent, the pure, the perfect, should thus have had to

suffer for the sins of men, the Just for the unjust, wounded for our transgressions, smitten to the death for our healing? Without attempting to sum up the answer to this in any formula, because every formula would most likely prove insufficient, we may still note certain guiding facts. Only let us not be too ready to follow in the track where so many have gone astray, and think that by one or two views or thoughts we have emptied this life and death of all their meaning; for our lights, as yet, are only broken lights, and we must remember that intellectually, no less than morally and spiritually, we have our Divine treasure in earthen vessels. As we frame our conceptions of the work of God in Christ, we are for the most part little better than the feeble interpreters of some great poem. That which to the rich full mind and penetrating glance of the composer was charged with innumerable thoughts and laden with endless meaning, becomes in our hands something very easily fathomed and understood, and we think we have read the whole, whereas in fact we have only pared it down to fit our own intelligence, and it is universal no longer.

But while we feel all this in drawing near to the Cross of Christ, we must still gather from it all the meaning which our lights will give us, for every element of true meaning brings us at least one step nearer to Him, and makes the true life less difficult.

So then, when the question rises before us how it was that He had to bear our sins in His body, through the Agony, through the Temptation, on the Cross, let us remember at least that all this was just the natural result of His coming on earth as the Son of Man, and that in this respect, as in all others, He was bowing beneath a law which is universal and unchangeable, and beneath which every child of man must go, only feeling that the Son of God has gone before us, and that we have His Cross to lean upon.

I do not attempt at this moment to show you in how many ways the death of our Lord was a reconciling death; how it reconciles us to God by the change which its power works in us, or how it reconciles all men to each other by the new spirit which it sheds abroad in their hearts, or how it reconciles men to themselves by lulling the discords in their nature and settling the differences that tear them to pieces, or again how it reconciles us to our lot and circumstances, to our difficulties, to our duties, by the Divine companionship in which it places us, and the undying hope which it sets clear before our eyes. The one thing which above all others I should wish you to carry away from this season of Christ's suffering is, that His vicarious sacrifice was the inevitable result of His great love, and that it is not only the one great act of God's love in Christ, but that it is not an isolated act—nay, that

on the other hand it is typical of the fundamental law by which heaven and earth are kept together, and a law under which every human life must also pass, our only personal choice in this matter being whether through our life we will stand by the side of the suffering Lord and bear our portion of the Cross, or whether we will join the crowd, and it will always be numerous, which is ready to cry, "Crucify Him," thus taking upon us the cross of final punishment and refusing the Cross of saving love.

When you come to think of this question of vicarious suffering and sacrifice, I trust you will always remember thus much, that apart from it the "love of God" is an unintelligible phrase. Attempt to take away from God's government of the world this element of vicarious suffering as the outcome of His love, and you will find that you have destroyed the very root of Christian life. There is no vitality in our Gospel if we are able to rob it of this. Once make it clear that our God in His love does not bear our sins and suffer for us His creatures, and Christian unity becomes a name without a meaning; such a Divine nature would be something lower than the human.

It does not take us long to learn that the natural way for love to exhibit itself is by sacrifice for the object. And so we see that the sacrifice of Christ is in fact the highest manifestation of the love of God. It is the

voice through which that love speaks unto us, through which we gain the undying assurance that this great love cannot fail. What is Christ's own interpretation of it? "God so loved the world," He says, "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So that our Saviour's sacrifice, being thus the highest manifestation of God's love, is in other words God Himself more clearly revealed unto us, and the law of God more fully expressed.

From the time when the verdict went forth against the human race that they must live by the sweat of their brow, God laid this law upon Himself not less than upon the sons of Adam, that all blessedness must spring from suffering, and that thus it is true in the highest and widest sense of all, that without blood there is no remission.

If we think of human suffering never touching our God till it touched Christ made man, we do dishonour to His infinite goodness and mercy, and rob the Godhead of its best attributes. From the very earliest glimpses of the true God down through all history we see the type and shadow of the Cross of Calvary not to be mistaken. How else could it have been said of the Father long before, that He was afflicted in His people's affliction, or that He bore with their backslidings as a man bears with his son, or that He was grieved with their stubborn

heart in the wilderness, or that He sent His messengers to strive with them till He was weary? Surely here at every step we are met by the love which acts through sacrifice, and we see God the Father also carrying our iniquities in the burden of sorrow. Wherever we look, in fact, at God's dealings with fallen man, we are conscious, as it has been said with undeniable truth, "we are conscious of a Cross unseen standing on its undiscovered hill, far back in the ages, out of which came sounding always just the same deep voice of suffering love and patience that was heard from the sacred hill of Calvary." And as it was with the feelings of the Father, so it is with the workings of the Spirit. For how else can it be said with any truth that we grieve the Holy Spirit of God by our sins, or that He is vexed and troubled, and striveth with us with groanings that cannot be uttered? How is this so very different from the struggle of Gethsemane, or the burden of the Saviour's life? And if this is all the same, if we see a God from everlasting to everlasting grieved by our sins and suffering for our evil ways, we cannot find it hard to see how we crucify the Son of God afresh if we are living a bad and sinful life.

By looking thus upon the sacrifice of our blessed Lord, and the great law of vicarious suffering of which that was the highest manifestation, I gain a new sense of the love of God thus suffering for me; and it is thus

that, if we would rise with Christ and share His kingdom, we must also suffer and die with Him. At some time or other we all pray that we may sit down with Him when He comes into the inheritance of His glory, but to all of us He returns the same answer: "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And no doubt we can, if we are filled with His love and have learned to lean upon His Cross; but suffering will have no beauty in it unless it be sanctified by love, as indeed it has no virtue in it unless we bear it for a good end and from the constraining force of love. And thus we arrive at the true idea of our own life, which is that we should aim, not at freedom from suffering, but at elevation of character and a spirit of unselfish devotion. If we never acquire this spirit, though we gain the whole world our life is a waste, and will end in darkness. It is easy enough to neglect these laws, which are written for our reading on the face of all Divine and all human life; but to neglect them with impunity is impossible. Whereas, if we bestir ourselves to renounce sin, if we turn to Christ as our guide, if we make self-denial and self-sacrifice, and devotion to the good of our fellows, and high ends, the ruling motives of our life, then we too shall rise with Christ and share in His blessedness, for we shall have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. May God give us grace thus to choose the right

way; may we go forth from our Lenten discipline and Easter thoughts with a new sense of our oneness with Christ in heart and life, in suffering and in hope; may we go forth feeling that it is our business to live for others and not for ourselves, and that the love of Christ constraineth us. They who rise from Lenten exercises in such a frame of heart and mind have not travelled with Christ through the dark valley to no purpose; nay, it may be said that they, if any, have solved the mystery of the death and resurrection, for they have risen to something like a certain hope of the life that never fails.

PART II.

Summer Term.

I.

WHY AM I HERE?

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. —PHIL. iii. 13, 14.

THERE are few things in the world more sad than to see the number of lives which are spoiled or wasted simply from want of anything like a true aim or purpose. It is melancholy enough to see strong passions or vicious tendencies making havoc of a man, and dragging down his better nature into bondage to the grosser; but it is even a sadder sight when we see good impulses and fine sensibilities, capacities, and inclinations for the true and the noble life frittered away, and coming to nothing merely because they are not bound together, or inspired, or stimulated, by any worthy aim or purpose. And this is a very common sight. Fine instincts and generous affections are by no means rare gifts. They are almost our

common endowment. There are few who do not feel within them all the springs of the best of lives, only they are not made to flow out. Our affinity to what is good is stronger and closer than our affinity to the evil; our instincts and affections have for the most part a very distinct bias towards the pure and the noble. How is it, then, that the lives of so many of us bear so little fruit? How comes it that all these gifts so often run to waste, or become the slaves and ministers of sin? On the one hand we have before us the examples of men like St. Paul, on the other we have our own miserable experience, and the sight of the poor imperfect lives all around us. Whence comes the contrast between the one and the other?

There are no signs to show that St. Paul had impulses or emotions which we have not. We cannot say that his affections or desires were created different from ours. His was no peculiar inspiration; it was just what is being constantly poured out upon every one of us from the great sources of Divine life. Only we see, in fact, that the balance is somehow different, that the result is very different. And the secret of the difference is not hard to read; he had learned to let all his purest and best feelings flow out towards the Saviour, Jesus Christ. Christ was to him not a mere name or unsubstantial shadow, as I fear He is to some of us, but an object of real love that stirred his soul continually. He

was filled with an engrossing desire to come closer to this Saviour, and to do His will more thoroughly; and he required no more than this to guide him straight forward. Whereas we let our life drift about in obedience to the impulses and desires or fashions of the day, just as they rise, without considering to what end they are likely to carry us, whether closer to Christ or further from Him, whether in straight or in crooked ways. Most of us, I imagine, know well enough what impulses, desires, or tempers we ought to eradicate from our hearts, only somehow or other we fail to make our beginning, we do not emancipate ourselves from that weakness of purpose which is so often the curse of our feeble life, or we have not learned to love the Saviour with an inspiring and purifying love; because we have never tried to know Him, or to come close to Him.

Let us just endeavour, then, to begin from this point, and follow, however imperfectly, in the steps of the Apostle Paul.

We feel our weakness, perhaps, and it is well that we should feel it, if it only leads us to lean upon Christ for new strength. It was this feeling which made Paul, in fact, so strong. Let us make this our chief encouragement for endeavouring to walk after his example. It is well for us to remember how this greatest of Christian saints was compassed about by many infirmities and weaknesses very like our own; for in the face of these

we dare not make *our* weakness an excuse for not trying to live the kind of life which he lived so well and so fruitfully.

If you think only of St. Paul as a great Christian hero, as far above us in all excellences, and only to be imitated in some distant degree, you are in danger of getting an entirely wrong conception of him. From his own words we gather a picture of him which is certainly different from this. He tells us of a man toiling in the midst of trial and suffering, very often in fear and weakness, and very often in despondency, so that the more we dwell upon his various moods the more we feel how very like he was to one of ourselves; but then, on the other hand, we see rising through all this the one great aim, the one engrossing motive, the sense of his high calling in Christ Jesus, the desire to do Christ's will, whereas we too often have no desire to do any will but our own. We have scarcely formed to ourselves a notion of a God of truth and justice and love standing at our right hand and demanding the service of our life. Our souls are inspired by no compelling spirit of devotion to one great end, by no feeling that we are following in the steps of One Who loved us so deeply that He suffered all things to draw us after Him.

It is here that we fall so far short in our attitude, spirit, and purpose. It is here that our lives go so far astray from the Apostolic standard. We have our

thoughts and notions about Jesus Christ and the ideal Christian life, but they are vague and nebulous. We use His name in every prayer, but it does not stir us as the name of a beloved one, it does not inspire us with new strength; it is not felt by us as a shield in temptation, as making us strong in our moments of weakness. And yet it ought to be all this to us if we are to walk as St. Paul walked.

It was this talismanic influence of the Sacred Name which inspired Paul with such unusual fervour. The vision of Jesus looking down on him in sorrow, and crying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" seems never to have left his soul. His life was one continual effort to be near Him Whom he had seen in the heavens, to be filled with His Spirit, and to spread that Spirit among men. "This one thing I do" was the unvarying cry of his eager and passionate soul; and on every page of these epistles it is simply Christ, and the love and the Spirit of Christ, which are preached unto us with constant reiteration: "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Now we cannot hear all this teaching of the Apostle, we cannot see him thus spending his energies and devoting his thirty years of labour and suffering to one thought and one idea, without either looking on his life as a strange mistake and delusion, or else feeling that if our life is to be worth anything we also must be

possessed by some such unity of aim, and directed by some such guiding idea. The question which St. Paul's example puts before us for our answering is whether we mean to let our life drift on towards we know not exactly what end, or like him to set up our mark, and press toward it. Between the two we cannot doubt or hesitate. We may indeed content ourselves with living from day to day without any definite purpose beyond present comfort or enjoyment, and without any feeling that our energies, capacities, and talents are given us for a definite end; it may never occur to us, perhaps, that we were created for any particular work or service; but the life we live in such a case is sure to prove pitiable and disappointing. Even if we manage to keep ourselves free from positive vice, which is not likely, it is a miserable thing to have no great aim in our life, to have no ideal before us, to lift up our souls from the petty and demoralizing influences which are working around us day by day.

Fortunately for us, God does not leave Himself without witness in our hearts. Our own instincts and desires cry out in their hunger and thirst after better things, the very discontent which gnaws the soul of one who gives his life to any worthless way, and has never sworn allegiance to any great purpose, is the voice of God calling upon him not to waste upon the earth those affections and yearnings which nothing less than Heaven can satisfy.

So, then, if we are wise, and have any ambition to live a life that will satisfy the soul within us, we must set up deliberately some definite mark to aim at; and no man would deliberately set up an unworthy aim, on which to stake the issues of his life.

Let us, then, learn from St. Paul's example. Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

How far can we say that we are doing anything of this sort? We believe, of course, in Jesus Christ; but how often does it happen that this belief merely dwells with us, and leaves our life just what it would be if no such belief were there! What we want is something very different from this, it is a moving power within us.

Such faith as that which filled St. Paul's heart is no mere belief, but an influence that turns beliefs into energies, energies that mould and direct us in all our common ways, and fix the tone of our life. Do we profess, then, to follow his example? If so, and it is a great profession, not to be made lightly, we declare that we are trying to direct our steps by the same light which guided his; and this means, in fact, that we are learning to love Christ with a real human love, that the thought of Christ is before our eyes every day, that we are living a life in which the influence of our prayers is felt, that we are trying to do what we feel to be the will of God, and not our own or any other man's will. Are we able to make any of

these declarations truly and honestly? For if we are, it is implied that we are aiming at truthfulness and purity and uprightness, and all such virtues, and that we despise and shun whatever is impure or base, or in any way unworthy. It is implied also that we do not yield to selfish or self-indulgent appetites, but that we are ready to give up our desires whenever they clash with that which duty demands of us. It is implied that we have learned, or are trying to learn, the lesson that no man liveth to himself, but that we owe our energies to the service of God and of our fellow-men.

How few of us can say that we have learned these lessons, or that we are travelling with any certainty in the way of learning them, and in the footsteps of St. Paul! And yet we might all say that by God's help we are trying, and will try, to walk in that way which he walked in, and we must all feel that there is no other way which can permanently satisfy the wants and desires of the soul.

What, then, though we stumble often, and often fail in our endeavours to keep close in life to Christ our Saviour? We can at any rate press forward, and live in hope that our weakness will be turned into strength, that we shall not always find it hard, as now, perhaps, we find it, to resist the evil and to choose the good. For we know that if we cling to Him He will not fail us. Our hope is that He will change our vile body that it

may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the power, as it is written, whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself; and we know that even now, in all our weakness, and in spite of all our failures, we are the temples of the living God.

Have you followed me in all this? Do you recognise the duty of thus considering your life? Then I have to ask you, as you set forth on another stage in our common journey, to resolve that you will use your young life so as not to waste it, that you will use your liberty without abusing it, looking always to the mark of your high calling in Christ Jesus; here to-day as members of a Christian school whose life depends upon your share in it; everywhere and always as sons of God who have been highly favoured, and of whom much will be required.

II.

MY FATHER'S BUSINESS.

Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?
—St. Luke ii. 49.

The passage from which I have taken this text ought to be of peculiar interest to the young, giving as it does an account of the only incident in our Saviour's boyhood about which we know anything, and the words of the text are His words. The incident itself is no doubt familiar to all of you. You cannot but remember that visit to Jerusalem when the Saviour was twelve years old, and His disputation with the doctors while His parents sought Him, not knowing where He was. You remember how when they found Him, the Evangelist tells us, "they were amazed; and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, Why is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."

We just get this glimpse of His early life, and nothing more, till He came forth eighteen years afterwards to do His work of human redemption. Instead of any large or graphic account of all these years, we are left to infer that His infancy and boyhood and early manhood were outwardly very much like those of ordinary men, excepting only the few things recorded in the gospels; that the thirty years of obscurity were a quiet and unobserved preparation for the brief period that followed them; and yet not an unconscious preparation, as is evident from the suggestive words of my text, and all the circumstances under which they were spoken. Unobtrusive and quiet those years must have been, or His fellow-townsmen would have been less astonished when the Spirit shone out in Him and He began His mission. But yet there can be no doubt that He Who at twelve years old was thus moved by these strange inquiring thoughts about His Father's business could not have lived through all the years that followed without many visitings of such thoughts and many forecasts of this work which He had come on earth to do, and for which He was preparing or waiting. It is significant for us that this one thing told of His boyhood is a startling anticipation of what belongs more properly to manhood. It is not some beautiful passage of a boyish life for your imitation simply as boys, but rather, if anything in the way of example, a warning to even the youngest to remember that

already you should look forward and feel that you are now preparing to do a work which has been allotted you as your Father's business, and that the more you fix your thoughts on the duties and calls of manhood, the more likely you are to do the will of Him Who made us, and to pass your boyhood as it should be passed.

The life of Christ, as you have been told times without number, is not meant to be merely a beautiful example of a life free from sin or fault. Its essence is that it is a life of trial and self-sacrifice, a life of consecration, a life set to fight against evil in many shapes—in fact, a reforming, regenerating, suffering life. And no life of ours is likely to be worth very much which is not more or less of this kind. The mere butterfly existence, the life which craves for enjoyment, satisfaction, and indulgence, is a pitiable thing to see, and even in some of its developments worse than that. And we cannot realize too soon that we shall find nothing which can serve us as an excuse for this in the life that typified the struggle between the good and the evil that are round about us, or between the earthly and the Divine instincts that are within us.

And it is in exact keeping with all this which we learn from our Lord's ministerial life that the one fact related about His boyhood is a fact which itself tells rather of opening and coming manhood.

Now what instruction has all this for you? What

does it suggest in reference to your present life, as you grow here from earliest boyhood to the age when you leave us and go out into the world as men?

It is probable that many among the younger part of you, and some, too, of the elder, have scarcely any notion of work or business, except as a task which is laid upon you to do, a task which you only think of as coming from the human hand that gives and exacts it, and which you would gladly escape if it did not involve punishment. This is a very common view of the work of daily life with both men and boys; but we should not on that account forget that it is the childish and mistaken view; and I have daily to remember that it forms part of our chief work, as your masters for a time, to eradicate any such notions, and send you forth from us, if it be possible, as men who have learned that human life is a field in which to labour from love or duty, and not from compulsion, or in any slavish fashion. Any one inclined to look upon the restraints and duties and trials of daily life in this latter way, as a burden from which to escape if he can, and as interfering with his natural enjoyments and his love of ease and pleasure, is met at once by this example from our Saviour's youth, if he has not already been met by some high thoughts and misgivings in his own mind.

What means this language of the Child about His

Father's business? What is this hearing of the doctors and asking them questions?

Surely the lesson is not difficult if we try to read it. However it may be with us, it tells us that with the first dawn of intellect and the very beginnings of His life there must have come to Christ those thoughts of a business which He had to do, a business not for Himself but for another. This, if you consider it, you will find to be the very opposite of every selfish view of your present life, and probably at variance altogether with your own thoughts and practice. Boys are ready enough to think of manhood as a time of work and duty, but that they need not trouble themselves with those things just yet.

Many of you doubtless plead with yourselves your youth as a reason why you should suffer evil to be, or join in it, or why you should let some idle habit keep its mastery over you, or why you should shrink away from all thought of responsibility or duty. You are so young, you say. And all this is natural enough to childish weakness; but then it is our duty to help you to get away from childish weakness or selfishness, as soon as may be, and we have this glimpse of our Saviour's boyhood, with this significant question about His Father's business, to guide us and encourage us in our endeavours to do this for you. If you had no teaching or instruction on this subject, if no attempts were made

now to stir your souls to consider the high call which is laid upon you, the rough school of your own experience would very likely bring you into its presence sooner or later, for God makes His will known to us in many ways, teaching us sometimes gently, sometimes sternly; but our duty is to anticipate in some degree the lessons of later experience, and to bring you on to the thoughts and feelings of manhood, saving you, if it may be done, from a long childhood of selfishness or folly.

No age is too early to begin to consider what it is that you ought to be doing, and what you ought to avoid. And there is no age, be it twenty years, or twelve years, or ten years, at which we are not bound to ask and see whether we are really about our Father's business. And it should help you in your youth to a regard for these things when you remember how soon your Saviour Christ—He Who is to be the example and type of all your inner secret life, of all your guiding purpose in your manhood—how soon He began to feel His soul stirred with these questionings, how soon His life began to be not merely a life of obedience to His earthly parents' word and rule, though you will be careful to observe that it still continued to be this. There was no precocious self-assertion, no breaking away from parental authority, no early assumption of independence, no hastening to begin the great work.

From this festival, we are told, He went back with His parents to Nazareth and was subject unto them, and long after the age when most of you will be settled in your professions, so far as we know He remained thus subject. And yet all this while His life was resting on a far wider and far deeper basis than any rule of obedience to the carpenter Joseph; but the obedience remained. Do not suppose, then, that when we exhort you to look forward to manhood, and, if possible, hasten its coming, putting away childish things, that this has anything to do with assuming or aping the airs of men, or professing a knowledge of the world beyond your years. This is a spurious manliness. These are follies from which every one who loves true manliness would pray that you may be delivered.

The true manly life is always a life of true humility, whilst the aping of manhood, which all men would deprecate, is the very reverse of this. He who has conceived any notion of manhood as a time for learning more day by day of what is God's will concerning us, and of coming nearer year by year to the mind and example of Christ; he who thinks that the life of a man ought to be regulated by a settled conviction that every man born into the world is born with a work to do which is not in any narrow or selfish sense his own work, but a work which he owes to Him Who endowed him with faculties to do it, such an one cannot learn too soon to think of

himself as coming near to manhood, to picture it to himself that he too is a worker in the vineyard of the Almighty.

The only advantages which as men you will have over your earliest boyhood are those of a cultivated intellect and a more enlarged and active conscience, which will bring home to you an increasing sense of God's nearness and your close dependence upon Him; unless indeed by childish or ignoble ways you stunt the growth of the Spirit within you, and darken the windows of your mind, for this also is possible.

Therefore your present work should be to advance as fast as may be to the condition of men, to get knowledge not merely for immediate ends, but because you are bound to cultivate the faculties which have been given to you, and because in plain words to remain in ignorance is sin; and besides this, to keep before you the more lasting and more difficult work of spiritual growth in accordance with all that you learn of truth, and all that your hearts suggest as coming from the Divine will, be it uprightness, or purity, or earnestness, or devotion.

And you are not left without these witnesses, I am well assured. The voice of the Spirit is distinct enough in your souls, as you grow year by year to new thoughts if you will only hear it,—hear it, that is, in reverent earnest, instead of playing with it in any flippant or

foolish fashion. Most of you could tell at the very least of indistinct and intermittent notions that come across you of a business which is higher far than anything which you have yet done or are doing.

The thrill of a noble purpose runs through your nature, the sense of power called out by some strong determination rises up in you, and you are lifted above the temporary instincts which make up the greater part of your life: the love of play or of enjoyment, the craving for ease or indulgence, these disappear before those other motions of the soul, and you wonder for a moment that they should ever have had so much influence over you. And these motions or voices, these influences which visit your souls and lift you up, these are the calls which come to lead you into the whole truth if you only hear them with an understanding ear. They come to set before you that stewardship of a noble life which God has put into your hands. If you answer them from your hearts, and give yourselves to follow them, then you are faithful stewards of Him who placed you here, born to no mean work; but if not, then are you faithless, and your reward will doubtless come, but it will not be the reward of the servants of Christ.

As you sit here Sunday by Sunday through these opening years of your life, a life laden with you know not what influences of good or evil, you may do well to consider pretty often what it is that you hope to make

of it. Is it to be a life of idleness or of industry, a life of folly or sin, a life of endeavour to do your duty faithfully and well, or is it to be a life which has not learned the meaning of this sacred name of duty, which acknowledges no rule but that of taste or liking, and which sees no God above it? You know not what trials coming years may bring to you, or in what subtle ways or by what subtle temptation of intellect, or spirit, or sense, the devil may strive to shut out all heaven from your eyes; but you do know that there are those in your homes who are praying every day for your good growth; you do know that there are the same Divine voices within you which once moved the soul of Christ Himself, calling you to do your heavenly Father's business; and you know that God gives His grace whenever you ask it, that He stands by you in strength whenever you lean upon Him, that He does not fail you except when you forget Him, and that you never go wrong but when you turn away from Him.

Let us learn, therefore, this one lesson of the Saviour's boyhood; let us listen to this warning note about our heavenly Father's business, till it lingers in our ears like the sound of sacred music. Thus learning it, there is hope for us that we may grow to something of that perfection which is reached only by those who from first to last have been endeavouring to lead the life that needs no repentance, who have grown with a continual heavenward growth, free always from the slavery of passion

and the defilement of sin. You are ambitious, some of you. Can you imagine any ambition more noble than to follow the steps of Jesus of Nazareth through a pure and guileless youth to a manhood of stable virtue, growing in wisdom as you grow in stature, and in favour with God and man?

III.

THE FEEBLE CHARACTER.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.—GENESIS xiii. 11.

CHARACTERS like that of Lot are apt to be passed over by us somewhat too lightly as we read the Holy Scriptures. Our eye dwells naturally on the prominent figures; we grow familiar with leading patriarchs, lawgivers, and prophets, while the minor characters stand indistinct and overshadowed in the background, and their features are only dimly realized. And yet these are the men, for the most part, who form the most exact types of everyday characters; and so the lesson of their lives very often comes even closer home to us than that of those who were greater and better than they.

Now Lot, as far as we can gather, was just a man of this lower stamp, a type of a very ordinary character; and we may learn various useful lessons from the contrast between him and his greater kinsman, Abraham, while the leading events of his life, with the glimpses

they afford of his spiritual state, are also significant of warnings which we may all apply in some degree to our own dangers.

Abraham and Lot had come forth together from the land of their birth in obedience to the same command. They started, it would seem, in the same hope, and joint-heirs of the same promises, and, as far as human eye could see, with the same future before them; and it is exceedingly painful to contrast with their common beginning the different ends to which they managed to travel, and the gulf that now separates their memories. The one rose to a position quite peculiar in the world's history, becoming the friend of God and the father of the faithful, while the other ended his life as the incestuous parent of Moab and Ammon, and left a memory to be blotted out.

And the difference is not very hard to explain. Abraham was guided from the beginning by a firm trust in God's promises; his steps were directed, not by the desires of the moment or the excitements of the world around him, but by a consciousness of things unseen, by a clear sense of God's presence in his life, and of a call that was upon him. And thus he attained that rare superiority—that true greatness, we should call it—which gives a man the power of acting above the world in which he happens to be living, and, independently of its current maxims, which places him out of reach of its

temptations and allurements and distorted rules, and renders him capable of using it without abuse.

But Lot seems to have been, on the other hand, as the mass of men are apt to be, a great way short of all this, even though we may not call him the direct opposite of it. He was through the greater part of his life not a bad man, but just one of that large class who blow neither hot nor cold, whose lives have very little of genuine worth in them, who are generally well spoken of, though it is impossible to recognise in them the salt of the earth, and who just help to swell the current tide of the life they live in, or, at the best, stand timidly aside and let it flow on, unpurified and unchecked.

We have to remember how St. Peter speaks of this man as "just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," as vexing his righteous soul from day to day with the unlawful deeds of those among whom he dwelt, so that the epithets applied to him are these—just, righteous, godly. So far you could hardly say more of Abraham himself; but at this point the difference begins. These qualities in Lot had no living and destroying force in them; they did not fire the man, and take full possession of him, and so they ended, as was inevitable, in utter failure.

If Christianity at its outset had been content and willing to take its place in the recognised Pantheon; if the Cross of Christ could have stood on friendly terms

with the gods of Greece and Rome, there would have been no persecutions of early Christians, they might have lived in a land that was pleasant to the eye and well watered everywhere; but then the Christian faith would have come to a miserable and despicable end long before this, and Christian Europe would have been another country to-day.

Well, the fatal characteristic in Lot was this willingness to carry his justice and righteousness into the tents of wickedness, and quietly to dwell there. It is an unanswerable condemnation of these so-called virtues of his, that possessing them he could sit still and cling to the haunts of vice in which he lived so long. His life was robbed of its beauty, and bore no good fruit, because, though possessing virtues in some passive and partial way, his conduct was not inspired or fashioned by them.

Up to a certain point his course was identical with Abraham's; but then there came a turning-point, and he chose the worse part. Abraham and Lot became very rich, so that the land was not able to bear them. Their substance was great, so that they could no longer dwell together. Their servants, too, quarrelled about the pastures, so that Abraham proposed that they should separate as brethren, and that Lot should choose where he would go. And in the choice which Lot then made he took his first false step. The sight before him was irresistible; he was allured by the beauty and fertility

of a valley polluted by wickedness, which has made it a by-word among men, and smitten soon afterwards by a scathing punishment, which has served as an everlasting warning against a depraved life. He "beheld all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." So we read that Lot chose all the plain of the Jordan and "dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom, but the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Thus for selfish ends he suffered himself to go with his family into the midst of the blackest wickedness, and run the risk of the very worst pollution. It is true that he kept apparently to the worship of the one true God, and did not fall into the sins of those cities; but the dismal chapter which ends the record that we have of him is a not unnatural sequel to the choice he made when he fixed his home in that sinful atmosphere. Very likely when he stood on the hills and made his choice he thought only or chiefly of the rich pasturage before him; or if he thought at all of the pestilence of that moral atmosphere, he fancied, as men do continually, that he could breathe it without being polluted by it, in it but not of it, forgetting that this is hardly possible except to the man who may be there to save it, crying aloud with a prophet's voice.

Only live passive in any bad atmosphere you please, and it will be very strange if you are not infected by it. In the presence of evil, if you must live in its presence, there is no safety but in open war, and the true spirit of Christ cannot endure to dwell with evil in peace, or to look upon it and do nothing to destroy it. This, however, is what this man Lot seems to have done. He lived on in the midst of sin, and in daily contact with it, because it would have cost him a sacrifice to separate himself from that evil fellowship; and as time went on the ties that bound him there grew stronger and more numerous. Once it seems as if a special opportunity had been given him to start afresh. Certain Eastern kings conquered the kings of the plain, and carried Lot away captive; and Abraham, on being told of this, aroused his followers and rescued Lot with all the spoil which the enemy had taken. Had he been so minded, the opportunity was in his hands to give up an abode which he must have known so well. But not so, he returned again to Sodom; and we may almost infer that if God had not remembered Abraham he might have been involved in the ruin of that infamous city. However, he was saved the second time, for God sent him out of the overthrow by special interposition; and if any warnings could have been sufficient to rouse him to some higher life, those of that terrible day could not have failed. Yet very soon we read another dark page

of his family life, and then the veil of oblivion is dropped over him.

At first it seemed as if his name would be linked with Abraham's through all the future, and as if he too would have a share in the history of Israel; but instead of that the Scripture narrative turns away from him, and leaves on our minds the impression of a wasted and unhappy life. The suggestions of this story are not difficult to read. Its application to common life is almost self-evident.

We see here the danger of being content to live in the midst of a low morality, no matter what intentions you may yourself have of living above it and apart from it, provided that your life is not a bold and earnest protest against it. If you are induced to continue in evil companionship by any worldly motive or any fear, then (and it is well to be warned beforehand) you are in imminent danger of sinking somehow to the level of that companionship. "For the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down." And moreover, we may learn too, from a life like Lot's, that there is danger in neglected warnings and opportunities which we will not see.

And let us remember with regard to the first of these points, the passive and tolerant attitude in the presence of evil, that none of us naturally enjoy contact with what is bad. There is within us a natural shrinking from evil, as well as a natural inclination to sin. Men

fall into sin because they cannot withstand the enticements of it. The sweetness of the prize with which it tempts them is too strong to resist, or the sacrifice which resistance would involve is too heavy. But when the voice of passion, or desire, or fear, or selfishness, is silent, when temptation is not playing upon them, in their cool and quiet moments, most men are moved by a strong dislike of what is bad. And thus it is that men are so often found to condemn strongly the very sins of which they themselves are guilty. Thus it is that the voice of society is raised so loud sometimes against sins which are nursed in the very bosom of it.

Now any one who disregards this feeling of repulsion which rises within him when he sees evil near him, any one who turns a deaf ear to this inward protest, and deliberately chooses to remain in the dangerous neighbourhood, and continues to breathe an atmosphere which he knows to be poisonous, is dallying with temptation as no man has any right to dally with it. A beast of the forest when it scents danger either flees for its life or prepares to resist, but men do neither one nor the other; they do not flee from evil, they do not wage war against it, they seem as if they loved to dwell on the debatable ground between good and evil, clinging, I suppose, to a dangerous or polluted spot because the pastures of the land are good. They cannot bring themselves to flee to the mountain, lest some

evil betake them; they worship the God of truth, but cannot give up the tents of wickedness. If any of us choose this doubtful path of the unstable man, shall we be surprised when we find that it is carrying us inevitably down to that darkness where we can see God no longer?

And if we pass on to the thought of neglected warnings which this story of Lot suggests, there is abundant food for our reflection. You see how Lot was warned. When he made his choice at first, no doubt he had the wickedness of the people before his eyes, still he chose that plain; he was carried captive from it and rescued again, still he returned to it; he was led away from the burning city by an angel from heaven, still he could not quit the plain; and finally, we are glad to close the page of his wretched history. From all this we seem to see how hard it is rightly to see our opportunities and recognise our warnings. And we may see, too, how our most critical opportunities are those which come to us early, before the current of our life has turned in any particular direction.

It is a wise proverb, then, which bids us seize time by the forelock. If early opportunities of taking a decided course, and choosing between the right and the wrong are not turned to good account, the chances of getting right in later years are comparatively small. In youth you either acquire habits of abusing and

neglecting privileges and warnings, or, on the other hand, you learn to use them for your everlasting benefit.

And one of these two things you are now doing. And should you now be foolishly choosing the worse course, it will be vain for you to say hereafter, Had I but been warned. God sends His warnings to us every day, till at last His long-suffering is worn out.

Dives cried on behalf of his brethren, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent;" but the answer is one for us to remember, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." For so it is with all of us, we have warnings enough and to spare. Let us take care that we do not acquire the fatal habit of despising them, for there is no more melancholy cry to be heard in earth or hell than the wailing of a soul crying for light when the final darkness has come over it.

One of the great mistakes of our life is that we expect our warnings to be something startling, whereas they come to us in the natural and often unnoticed result of actions or habits. Lot might have been warned a thousand times over to get him away to a purer air; but he could read no warning, and it is apt to be so with all of us. Death, says the story, and a certain man once made a bargain, the man stipulating that Death should send him so many warnings before

he came. And one day, years thereafter, to his great amazement the King of Terrors stood before him. He had broken the bargain, so said the man, while he clung eagerly to life. Death, he alleged, had sent him no warnings. "No warnings!" was the answer; "his eyes were dim, and his ears dull of hearing, his gums were toothless, and on his bent and palsied head his grey locks were all but gone; these, the heralds of Death, had come to him, but their voices had been unnoticed. The hand of Death had been upon him, and he might have known it; but now the day of salvation was past."

And what of our life? We too let experiences come over us without learning their lesson; we choose our course without considering whither it will carry us; our opportunities are before our eyes and beneath our feet, hour by hour, only in our blindness we do not see them. Our desire is that our names may be written in the record of God's dealings and in the Book of Life, not for a little while, and only to disappear again, but for ever and ever. We do not wish it to be recorded of us that we began our pilgrimage in the company of the favoured ones, that we were numbered for a little while among the sons of God; but that we turned our backs upon the light, and chose to dwell in the haunts of sin, and so received the sinner's everlasting reward of banishment from God's presence, and being blotted out of His Book.

But if our hope of salvation is a real and living hope, we must begin to-day to prepare for entering into it by keeping close to God and Christ, and flinging far from us the pestilent heresy that we may venture for a time to linger in sinful ways without being doomed to the sinner's fate.

IV.

PROGRESSIVE MORALITY.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent.—JUDGES v. 24.

THE story of this woman's work has just been read to us as one of our appointed lessons to-day, so that we are in a manner specially invited to consider it, and to gather from it such instruction as it has for us. And it is one of those startling narratives which few, I suppose, can read without asking what they mean. Indeed there is nothing in the whole course of the Old Testament history more striking than the contrast between this deed of Jael as it appears to our notions, and the blessing pronounced upon the doer of it by the prophetess. How, then, are we to understand it? If it were not for the blessing we should pass over the record without any feeling of difficulty; but it would certainly never have occurred to any of us to look upon it as a deed which our God could bless and approve.

Had it not been for the words of Deborah which I have quoted in the text we should have seen nothing in the story but one of the many instances in which the

Divine purposes are wrought out through the natural instrumentality of the baser human motives.

We know that in the temple of the universe there are vessels of honour and vessels of wrath, and that all alike are instruments in the hands of the Lord, working out the great purpose of His Providence which runs on and widens through the ages; and in the Bible, as in all other places, we are not surprised to see the child of darkness unconsciously doing the work of the Father of Lights. And as we read this chapter of our lesson to-day we cannot but feel that had we been left to form our own judgment of Jael's act we should certainly have decided that she too was one of these. But then there rises before us with its startling clearness the voice of the prophetess in Israel, crying, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent." And here we have what is no doubt a very real difficulty.

Just consider for a moment the nature of the deed. The army of Jabin king of Hazor had been defeated by the Israelites at the waters of Megiddo; and in the confusion of defeat and slaughter, Sisera, the commander, had deserted his chariot and fled away on his feet northwards for his home, and among the hills of Naphtali he came, alone and weary, to the encampment of a friendly tribe. No doubt he hailed the sight of that tent as a place of rest and refreshment; for there was

peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber.

And Jael advanced to meet him with ready hospitality: "Turn in, my lord, turn in to me, and fear not." And he turned in, and lay down to rest; and she covered him over with a mantle; and in answer to his prayer for a little water to quench his thirst she gave him milk in her costliest dish, treating him as a favoured and distinguished guest. And so, trusting to the honour of his Arabian hostess, trusting to the feeling which held as inviolate the life of one who had eaten and drunk at the hand of his entertainer, he lay down in his weariness and slept. And then she, who had thus invited him to shelter, "Turn in, my lord, and fear not;" who had given him of her best, and soothed him to sleep in confidence, took a nail of the tent and a hammer in her hand, and smote it into his temples as he lay, defiling her tent with the blood of a murdered guest.

About the nature of such a deed as we read the story of it we can have, I think, but one opinion. To us it must always remain a deed of perfidy and crime. We are told nothing of Jael's motive beyond what is to be gathered from the few facts recorded. There was peace between her house and the king whom Sisera served. Sisera came to her in his flight, as to one whom he had reason to trust; she received him with every demonstration of friendship, and then, having

slain him as he slept, she went forth to meet his pursuer, as she had gone to meet him: "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest."

And then there follows the blessing of Deborah, and we are left to interpret it as best we can. And we may derive a lesson of much instruction from the treatment which this story has met with at the hands of Biblical commentators. What seems in the narrative to be either an act of blind and fierce fanaticism, or else of pure calculating selfishness, an attempt to find favour with the victor by the murder of the fugitive, and in either case an act of extreme perfidy, breaking the most sacred ties of honour and hospitality, having received, as it has, the directly pronounced blessing of a prophetess in her song, has naturally perplexed many interpreters, and cannot fail to raise a question in the minds of all of us. And in one respect the study of this passage is of the greatest use to us, for it teaches almost more clearly than any other the importance of adopting a right method in the reading of God's Word, while some of the interpretations which have been given of it may very well serve as a warning to us, illustrating as they do a mode of dealing with the Sacred Writings which has so often proved dangerous and mischievous, that which men call the apologetic. Men are very apt to come to the Word of God, not as students whose business it is to

learn its meaning, but as self-constituted defenders. They come with certain previous notions which have rooted themselves in the mind they know not how, and so they read the written Word, not as seeking to know what it says to the soul of the simple, the unprejudiced, and faithful reader, but whether it can be so understood as to square and fit in with some rule which they have learned concerning its interpretation. Whereas it is clearly our duty above all things, in reading the Book which we reverence as the Book of Life to us, and in seeking for the truth which is contained in it, to come to it always as humble seekers for its plain meaning, and to come with the maxim clear in our minds that we should add nothing to what we find declared in it, either to prop up our own notions concerning it, or to make clear what seems dark.

On these sacred subjects the most sacred of all rules which we have for our guidance is that we should be content with the truth that is clearly told, whether we like it or not, and that we should have the humility to wait where we cannot see, remembering always that God is His own interpreter.

In reading the story of Jael, however, and many others also, it has been the custom to follow a different course.

The most commonly received theory in regard to this story has been that Jael was moved by a Divine impulse,

or by some special revelation to slay the enemy of the people of God. And I cannot imagine that any worse method of solving the difficulty could possibly have been invented. By what right do we thus fill up what the sacred historian has left unwritten? There is no trace in the narrative of any such extraordinary influence rousing Jael to this act: we read nothing about any Divine impulse which stirred her, or of any revelation given to her from above. And indeed it argues an entire forgetfulness or ignorance of God's revelation of Himself to fill up the sacred narrative by such insertions. He Whom we worship has revealed Himself as a God of truth and justice and mercy and love, as a God Who hates iniquity and every form of falsehood, and shall we venture, then, to attribute to Him the direct inspiration to a deed of perfidy and treachery? It is one thing for Him to allow the human will to be influenced and led by human passions and desires; that is, to leave every soul free to work out its own salvation or ruin, to do righteousness or to do evil; and another, and very different, to suggest directly and by some Divine afflatus a work of treachery and falsehood.

Let us take care how we add to any text any such interpretation; for it is in fact nothing less than doing dishonour to the holy nature of Him to Whom we look

up as the Source from which all goodness flows. It would be easier far to say that we have here a difficulty which we cannot solve, than to suppose for a moment that the Lord our Righteousness inspired Jael to do this deed, and blessed her for doing it. Nay, we are bound not to believe, on any authority less than the declaration of God Himself, that He could prompt and urge one of His creatures to an act so contrary to His own unchangeable perfections, so contrary to those moral instincts which He has written in the hearts of men.

No doubt it is true that at times the special command may overrule the general law, or the higher law may overrule the lower; but the evidence in such a case must be unmistakably clear, and must certainly not be supplied by our own hopes and fears and wishes.

Abraham was ready, as we read, to sacrifice the son of his old age in obedience to the Divine command, and we commend the faithful and obedient spirit which was willing to set this command of God above his yearning affection for the son of his hope; but then the command, we are told, was very clear to him. The true theory in every case of this kind is surely this, that where the higher law or the higher motive may seem to clash with the lower, we must still follow and obey the higher; for it is thus we are taught in other words the lesson of Christ our Lord, "He who loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Thus, then, for us to assume that when Jael was guilty of her treacherous and cruel crime she must have been moved by some Divine and heroic impulse, is just to do dishonour to the God Who has stamped upon our nature an eternal law of truth and uprightness and good faith as the fundamental virtues of life.

Other interpreters, who agree that the notion of Jael's being Divinely moved to the murder is a pure invention, yet tell us that the deed was really approved and commended by God because of some zeal for His people which stirred her to it. We are thus to suppose that she hated Sisera as the enemy of Israel, and that she slew him in her zeal to do God service; and though she thus trampled under foot the laws of truth and hospitality, she was blessed in her evil deed because of her blind zeal. Here again we have a well-meaning interpretation which is entirely without foundation in the narrative itself, and is simply invented to meet a particular view of the blessing of Deborah. If we adopt this view we have still to believe that the God of truth and justice, Who is unchangeable in His perfection, Who lives enthroned in the midst of immutable virtues, set the seal of His Divine approval to one of the darkest of deeds.

Let us learn, then, from these consequences to which our theories may bring us, to be content in reading God's Word to take the facts as they stand, and to frame no

theories for ourselves excepting what these facts will warrant; and above all, to remember that God is just and true and holy, and that He blesses no man who does not strive to grow like unto Him in spirit and in aim. If we wish to rise to the hope of a Divine blessing we must build our life on the only true foundation of the moral virtues.

But is there no solution, then, to this difficulty of the blessing by Deborah? The solution would seem, in fact, to be a very simple one, that though this was Deborah's blessing, it was not Divine. We have to remember as we read these narratives that the revelation of God was a gradual growth. It is proved by innumerable facts in the Old Testament history that even the greatest of those of whom we read, prophets, priests, or kings, were in many respects not enlightened beyond their time, so that even the least of us in the kingdom of Christ is greater than they. And so it is easy to see that this prophetess, Deborah, inspired as she was with national fervour, was not morally enlightened beyond the morality of the age in which she lived. We have our Saviour's own declaration to assure us that God drew His people, step by step, up from heathen darkness till they became fitted at last for the teaching of His Son. This Deborah, one of the links in that upward chain, had been taught to love her friend but hate her enemy; and we are not surprised that the enthusiastic spirit within her should break forth in

words of blessing on the hand that slew the object of her hate, the enemy of the Lord's people. To her Jael was just the instrument which struck the last blow in the deliverance of Israel from their enemies, and in the exultant song of victory it was natural enough that she should have an honourable place.

But while we read these records of the distant past, it may be well for us to remember that we are born to a new spirit and living under a new commandment, and that the servants of Jesus of Nazareth can neither do nor approve any such barbaric deed as this which is recorded of Jael. It is our business to have no share in treachery, or wrong, or cruelty, in whatever cause it may seem to be done, or under the shelter of whatever name.

It will save us, indeed, from many a mistake if we do but remember, as we read the history of the Jewish people, or indeed any other history, that God in His Providence has led the world gradually onward to clearer conceptions of Himself, and that His greatest act for this end was the giving of His only begotten Son to guide us through His Spirit into all truth. Let us take care, then, not to lower our life to any standards of action which belong to periods of darkness.

If we who live in a late age are no nearer to Divine truth than those who lived in the twilight of history, then have the centuries of God's Providence

come in vain for us, and the Spirit of Christ has been poured out in vain. But our God does not labour without fruits. He is drawing us unto Him continually.

V.

CHRISTIAN ENLIGHTENMENT.

Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.—1 SAMUEL xv. 3.

I SUPPOSE there is no one in this congregation who does not feel that this was a fearful injunction. When we think of the merciless extermination, with all the terror and agony it involved to the innocent child and the helpless woman, and the indescribable excesses of human passion which are the almost invariable accompaniments of such work, we are startled to see how different from ours must have been the moral sense of a people that could receive such an order as Divinely sanctioned. In fact, such a passage as this brings it home to us more clearly than any amount of mere description how great is the gulf between our feeling in regard to such matters and that of those early communities; for while on the one hand such an injunction may startle or shock our moral sense, on the other we know that it indicates nothing unusual.

This fierce command may very likely perplex or

peace between Jabin k
Heber.

And Jael advanced t
tality: "Turn in, my lo
And he turned in, an
covered him over with a
prayer for a little water
him milk in her costliest
and distinguished guest.
of his Arabian hostess,
held as inviolate the l
drunk at the hand of l
his weariness and slept.
invited him to shelter, "
who had given him of h
in confidence, took a na
her hand, and smote i
defiling her tent with th

About the nature of s
of it we can have, I thi
must always remain a
We are told nothing o
to be gathered from the
peace between her ho
served. Sisera came
whom he had reason
every demonstration

rd of comment or a tinge of pity how a whole pulation was blotted out, or the inhabitants of eleaguered town were burnt alive, vainly imploring ls and men; whilst in the Bible we read not only of arbarous king like Adonizedek, with his threescore d ten mutilated captives of royal rank gathering their t under his table, or of the Danite tribe falling wares on a peaceful and inoffensive community—a ple quiet and secure—smiting them with the edge of sword, and burning their city with the fire; but even David himself driving his defeated enemies under rrows of iron and under axes of iron, and making m to pass through the brick-kiln. So that you see w this injunction which came through Samuel to Saul smite Amalek without sparing, man and woman, nt and suckling, though acknowledged perhaps even the time as very stern, was in no way out of joint th the ideas and practices of those to whom it came, on whom the vengeance was thus terribly inflicted. erywhere in those days, and for long centuries afterrds, men counted it an unquestioned rule of life that ey should hate their enemies, and it seemed to them quite natural to destroy or enslave or otherwise ill-treat them without scruple or regret. Nor had it occurred to their thoughts that the unoffending members of a community had any claim to be exempted from the common fate. When the order went forth, it went quite naturally

in this form: "Slay them, man and woman, infant and suckling."

With us, of course, it is quite different. We could not tolerate such a rule of conduct, it would be an abomination unto us; we should feel that we had relapsed into barbarism if we could bear to have anything to do with it, and that our Christian principles of life, as we call them, were a mere profession. We have been nursed in the light of a new heaven and a new earth, and we could not endure this ancient darkness of the moral sense. Yet we can understand it in some degree, because we know how it was with the men of those far-off times. They had no thought of the common fatherhood of one God, loving all men equally as His children; and there was no feeling of a common humanity so strengthened and fostered in their hearts as to stay their hand when it was uplifted for slaughter or outrage. Thus respect for human life had scarcely dawned among them, or at any rate had gained no such influence as to make any visible mark in history. The idea of the claims of each individual man, of the native dignity or inalienable rights of each separate soul, was a thing undreamt of. We have to wait for the revelation of the Son of God, for this new and Divine ferment, which is to change the whole aspect of human relations: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you,

Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you, that ye may be the children of your Father Which is in heaven."

When we think of the blessed consequences in individual life, in social life, in political and national life, and even in international relations, which have been growing and gathering force among men ever since that Divine Word was uttered, flowing with a current fitful and uncertain, perhaps, but fertilizing, purifying, and beautifying human society wherever it flows, we cannot fail to turn to our God with thankful hearts that our lot has been cast in these latter days and in these Western countries, where the name of Christ is above every name, and the laws that He proclaimed to us are, professedly at least, the fundamental laws which regulate the conduct of men. "There is a sense which is neither fanatical nor carnal," says a writer of our day,* "in which the Bible" (and we may suppose him to be thinking of the New Testament in particular) "may be said to be the charter of human rights: it has endowed man with an individuality which he can never lose, and which rulers must respect. The governments of the old world and the new rise upon different bases. The old empires were founded upon the depreciation and insignificance of man: he was told he was a nobody, that he was a piece of property, that he had no rights.

* Mozley, Lectures on the Old Testament, p. 227.

On the other hand, the governments of the new world (that is, of course, the civilized governments of the Christian world) are founded upon the high idea of man as a being who has substance, rank, and rights."

And this new estimate of every man's inalienable rights has altered the whole range of our moral sense, giving us new thoughts and new opinions, new feelings and new rules of practice, in all the relations of public and private life, so that the things which once prevailed through long ages, and still maintain their hold in many quarters of the earth, things which seemed quite natural, seem to us intolerable.

Such is the blessed change that has been wrought in us through the revelation of Gospel teaching and the progress of civilized life.

Thus, if we return for a moment to our text, and the ancient practices, the ancient cruelties, the ancient outrages and barbarities of war which it suggests to our thoughts, we see them as in a land of darkness far beneath us, from which our moral life has travelled upwards, to return to it, thank God, no more for ever.

Do some of you, possibly, not quite understand this? Let me put it, then, in a concrete form. If we were to read to-morrow morning that some body of English soldiers, officered, let us suppose, by old Cliftonians, men who grew up among us as friends and companions, had, in some province of our empire, stamped out a dis-

turbance or avenged an insult by massacring indiscriminately the population of some town, man, woman, and child; if the record were to tell us that children had been murdered by them in sight of their parents, infants spitted on the soldiers' bayonets, women vilely maltreated; that some who had taken refuge in a strong position had been deliberately burnt alive in it, we should cry out with one voice that the thing is impossible. If, however, it should be proved beyond a doubt, there is not one amongst us here to-day who would not be filled with rage and shame. Englishmen would feel their national name dishonoured, and we here should feel that those representatives of our school who had had a hand in such a business had branded us with the stigma of a personal disgrace. In this way I trust you may realize distinctly how the Christian and other teaching for which you have to thank God has raised us above the level of barbaric standards and practices.

And yet it must be confessed that we have learned these fundamental lessons of progressive morality very partially and imperfectly; or rather let us say that we are still stumbling over them like a child over the study of a new language. He has by frequent drill and repetition mastered one page of his author, so that he can say it as fluently as we please. We turn the page, and there we find the same words, the same constructions,

the same principles and rules of language, only the combination is somewhat varied, or the subject-matter is not exactly the same, and he can make nothing at all of it, he interprets it all upside down; and so it is sometimes with the moral estimates of men, or classes, or parties, or nations, so it is with their opinions and their sympathies. It is as if the rule of Christ had not been preached to them, and they had never professed it.

I might illustrate my meaning from a great many quarters, for the world, alas! still furnishes abundant material for such illustrations; but I will confine myself to two instances taken from our national life.

Those of us who remember the American civil war, which ended in the victory of the Northern States, and the consequent wiping out of the curse of slavery from the North American Continent, will remember how all through the middle and upper classes of this country the current of sympathy for the Southern slave-owners was almost universal. We in England had paid a great price to free ourselves from that same institution of slavery which we had at last learned to feel as a national crime, we would not have polluted our own hands any more with such a cursed thing; and yet in our imperfect grasp of Christian principles we let our sympathies go out in support of the men who were fighting for the privilege of maintaining this very thing, whether their countrymen would or no. Of course we did not mean

to give our sanction to slavery, or its immoralities and its cruelties; but we were led away by our sympathy for men who exhibited the culture and the virtues of an aristocratic or dominant class, or, as it might have been expressed, by our liking for gentlemen. Such was the common sentiment, which you might have heard echoed from tongue to tongue by religious men, by tender women, sixteen or seventeen years ago, in almost any newsroom or country house, or round any dinner-table; and yet I suppose that now to-day you would hardly find a man or woman anywhere who would confess without shame that such had been his support of the slave-masters' struggle for supremacy.

Let us turn for a moment to the present time. Every day we are reading or hearing of the fierce and cruel warfare which is at this moment doing its murderous work in the east of Europe. As we read the narratives that come to us, we understand better very likely than ever before what and of what sort have always been the practices of warfare in the old world, and we can more easily picture the sufferings of Asiatic populations throughout their long history.

This present war, we know, when stripped of all its accidental elements, represents the collision between the enlightened and the darker moral sense, between progress and stagnation; for it is in its essentials the uprising of a long oppressed and frequently outraged population

against the worst, the most hopeless, and most corrupt government which is anywhere to be found in the community of Western nations. During the course of these events we have seen this government make itself responsible for every crime that shocks our moral sentiments. It employs soldiers and servants who respect no law, human or Divine; it instigates or condones massacre and outrage, the details of which for very decency I cannot enumerate; and yet it is served by Englishmen who were nursed in the teaching of the Gospel of Christ, and it is admired by Englishmen and Englishwomen who are to-day professing everywhere their allegiance to this same Gospel and its laws of life and conduct. Wherever we turn we find men avowing their sympathy for it, as if it were defending the sacred rights of human progress, instead of being, as it is, the type and representative of old world cruelty and political corruption.

It would be instructive for us to consider how it has come to pass that English opinion and sympathy have thus gone so lamentably astray, and become so essentially at variance with the fundamental principles of Christian enlightenment. We should see many currents contributing to the general stream. We might indicate some unscrupulous journalists as one source of influence; hard materialists, and their rooted dislike of Christian earnestness, as another; the so-called men of the world, with their contempt for principles and their hatred of

sentiment, as yet another; the admiration which an aristocratic or dominant military caste always wins from a certain class of minds as another; inherited national jealousies, likes and dislikes, as another; and so on through the long catalogue.

But all through and underneath every one of these influences we feel that there is another more fundamental than any of them, that we have not learned the primal lessons of the Sermon on the Mount. The doctrines and principles of Christian morality have not so penetrated to the sources of our active life, they have not so taken hold of us, as to direct our judgment and our sympathies, though we go about declaring that these doctrines and these principles are the salt of the earth.

O God, Who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

VI.

PARTING REMINDERS.

Then cometh He to His disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me.—ST. MATTHEW xxvi. 45, 46.

YOU remember, no doubt, the scene which is partly described in these words; you are not likely to forget how the Saviour, laden with sorrow and the untold burden of dark forebodings, took with Him three of His disciples into the solitude of Gethsemane; how He prayed in that night of sore oppression, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me;" and how, when He came out of His Agony to look for the comfort of sympathizing followers, He found them sleeping instead of watching. It was with them as it is with us so often—that solemn moment was like any common time. They did not know the destinies which hung upon it, and they felt no distinct foreshadowings of the dark future.

You remember the Saviour's half-compassionate, half-reproachful question: "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" And then how He withdrew again from

human sight, and wrestled with His trial in the same prayer; and again He came to find His weary disciples sleeping as before. And a third time He bowed beneath that cloud of darkness in the final struggle between weakness and strength, between that which we can all feel and that which as yet we only realize dimly. And then the third time He came, uttering the words which I have read to you: "Sleep on now, and take your rest; for the Son of Man is betrayed." All this we remember, whatever the inferences may be which we draw from the narrative.

And I would ask you to dwell with me for a little on some of the lessons which it suggests; not now, not to-day, on the Saviour's struggle, or on the conflict between the powers of heaven and hell which was fought out in the darkness of that night. What I wish rather to fix your attention upon is the attitude of the disciples, and the contrast between them and their Lord. In other words, it is not the Sacrifice or the Passion of the Son of Man, it is not the mysterious relations between Deity and humanity, or between good and evil in the human heart, which has led me to this passage to-day, but rather the inferences which we may draw from the Saviour's words to His drowsy followers. On one side there rises before us in this picture the Man of Sorrows, laden with sins which are not His own, praying, suffering, agonizing, in the full consciousness that now is the turning-point of the

spiritual history of mankind, now is the great crisis in the life of the world; and on the other we see the disciples as they lie in thoughtless sleep, with no kind of realization of that sore trial which He was bearing for them, without any presentiment of the storm which was soon to burst around them and scatter them like sheep. And it would be easy to show how this contrast is repeated in almost every human life, in almost every human society—the family, the school, the community at large, and how this mysterious scene is the great type of what recurs continually in every generation of men. The parent watches, and prays, and sacrifices himself, as some of yours do, bearing many a burden of anxiety and care for the child who sleeps or plays away his young life in thoughtless forgetfulness of all that is being done for him, and of all the unseen things which the stream of time is bearing down upon him.

And I might point to a somewhat similar relation between you and us in this place. There are, no doubt, many among you who think lightly, or who do not think at all, of life's duties, dangers, and opportunities, while it remains for us to watch and guard, as best we may, against any evil which might seize upon you, and to nurse the good of which as yet you may hardly know the true value. Such is the irony of human life which is held up to our view in the picture of the sleeping disciples.

But passing by all this, let us turn to the Saviour's words, "Sleep on now, and take your rest;" and we have to notice the apparent contradiction which follows them, "Rise, let us be going," for in this we have half the lesson of the passage. The two sayings together form a theory of life—one looking backward, the other forward—which may be useful to us to-day.

He had warned the disciples in vain to watch and pray, and now it was too late for that, all was over; the opportunity had slipped away from them and was buried in the past, so that, as far as this duty went, they might sleep on, for it must remain for ever undone. But then He turned away at once from this contemplation of the unchangeable, and pointing onward to present duty He said, "Rise, let us be going." The one thing was beyond their control, and though they might mourn, they could not alter it; there would be no answer to their endeavours but "Too late," so that it behoved them now to turn at once to the courses which were still open. Thus the text reminds us also of the past, which we cannot change or recall, and the future, which is still in our hands to use. And such a time as the present with you and me seems to be exactly suited for these reflections. There is no novelty in them, they must come to us very often; but they can never come with more force than on this day to some of you.

You have completed your year of work or idleness, you have watched or slept, you have spread pure and good influences around you, or you have distilled the poison of evil example, and now the motives which stirred you to do this or that are no longer active or strong within you; there is silence in your soul, and so you can look back on the work of your hands and see it in its true proportions.

Some of you also are looking back now on a whole chapter of your earthly life which is wound up and done with in this ending of your school-days; and whatever there may have been of good or evil in it, there remains now only the memory, and the lessons which all our life brings with it.

There are, there must be, regrets, no doubt, for any evil that may have been done; and very unenviable is it to have to look back on any seeds of sin which one may have sown in the world. But at such a time there rise also those feelings of satisfaction for any good deed or any worthy course of life which are the best reward to every one who chooses the right. Do we turn away from these things as common-places? Nay, in any case we cannot help looking back; and whether we think of these disciples, who might have watched in Gethsemane and did not, or whether we look back on our own misspent and wasted days, or observe the course of others who have flung away the precious gift of time, the life

which is gone keeps thrusting upon us its plain lessons.

It is possible, we see, to dream away this life; it is possible to let opportunities slip through our hands and bury themselves irrevocably in the sands of the past. Some of you may possibly be conscious that you have let idleness lay its hand upon you, and have allowed faculties to rust which you might have cultivated; you may be looking back, perhaps, on frivolity, or thoughtlessness, or want of purpose, or self-indulgence, or a tortuous, untruthful life; some may even have to recall deliberate choice of the evil and rejection of good. For the lives of some men go on in this way from the cradle upwards, running themselves out in idle waste, and leaving only a bitter retrospect.

If we learn, then, this lesson from these words of Gethsemane, we shall perhaps take care that it be not so with us.

At such times as this, when our life breaks up and runs in fresh streams, we may hear through the voice of changing circumstances our Lord calling unto us to watch with Him, and we may learn to pray that we enter not into temptation. The reflections that rise in our hearts at such times are the warning sounds that stop the flow of life, should it be flowing towards ruin unheeded; and if these reflections shape themselves into resolutions, if from them we begin new habits, then

we are listening to some purpose to the voices which come to us out of the depths of the Divine life while there is yet time to listen, and we shall escape the bitterness of hearing at last the words which tell us that all is over: Sleep on now, what you might have done you can do no longer.

These things remind us that our life is a time of trial, or probation, or transition, that it is leading us inevitably to one of two ends; and if we choose to forget this, if we choose to shut our eyes to the fact that we are sent into the world to be made fit for high destinies or to be proved unfit for them, if we choose to sleep away the time which is given us for action, to dwarf or deprave the faculties which ought to be lifting us upwards, there will come a moment some time when the full truth will flash upon us that our day is gone. I cannot expect you to anticipate that moment now, but it is certain to come to all who waste their life.

There is no mistake about this. We may turn away from such thoughts and shut our eyes against them, but some day or other a shock will waken us; and the only question is, shall we rouse ourselves the first or second time? or shall we slumber on in a careless, sinful life, till the final voice tells us that time has fled, and we feel ourselves in the presence of the unchangeable, and what once was warning is turned into a sentence of death: Sleep on, for it is too late?

Some such thoughts as these are not only appropriate to a day when we are about to separate for a time, and when some are going to come back no more, but it is our plain duty to dwell on them; they are thrust upon us, as we sit here, by the force of circumstances, and I merely point to them, as to the lesson which your life itself is preaching to you.

You can hardly go away from this place without dwelling on such things, if, that is, you dwell on anything. I may say that, travelling as all men are to such momentous ends, it would not be right for you to go from stage to stage without reflecting that each one has its own duties and its own call; and if you miss the meaning of these, there remains a blank in your heart through all time. Standing, therefore, at one of the turnings of life, about to separate, to meet again or not to meet, we cannot tell, certainly never to meet again as we are now, it is no idle exercise for you to look to that which is past and consider it; it is no mere sentiment which should stir you to ask yourselves whether you have used opportunities which have come and will not come again; whether you have shed good influences and pure words around you, and whether the seed you leave in the hearts of those with whom you have lived is a seed of life or death; whether you have learned to arm yourselves against temptation by prayer and faith in Christ; whether you have upheld honest and open

dealing, and learned to feel that selfishness is sin. These, and a thousand other such questions, come to us when we take leave of that which will meet us again no more till eternity sets it before us. If we leave it carelessly and without reflection, if we leave it without resolves to profit by our falls, and without prayer to Him Who upholds us from falling, we shall go into the dark future unarmed, and our experience will have come to us in vain; and at last we shall suddenly find that all is finished, and that we may sleep on, if remorse will let us.

But as yet God calls us to look forward and upward. Rise, and let us be going. Whatever our past may have been, our duty is with what remains. If we can look back on a life well spent, let us cherish it; but if otherwise, bury what you can of it, and as far as possible begin again. Christ is gracious to those who come to Him; He is ready always to take even the fragments of our life and bind them up into a living whole. So, no matter what your memory may tell you of, the anchor in which you trust should be faith and hope and firm resolves.

And by the help of Him Who never deserts us you will not fail. "God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss, and Christ is ready to receive us; but we must turn to Him while He is near, for whether here or elsewhere we do not know how long."

PART III.

Autumn Term.

I.

COMPANIONSHIP.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.—PROVERBS xiii. 20.

OF all the external circumstances which influence our life and character, our daily companionship may be said to be among the most potent, and the Bible utterances are very strong on this subject. Sometimes they dwell specially on the causes which draw men together, assuming that like chooses like, and that a man may in fact be known by his associates. It is, for instance, with such a thought in his mind that the Psalmist cries to God, "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts." He appeals to the character of his companions and his friends as a testimony before God to the character of his own life. It may be profitable for us now and then to consider whether we could make any such declaration about the companionship we choose and delight in. But more frequently these texts tell us

rather of the consequences of intimacy than of the causes of it. They warn or exhort about companionship because we become, as they assume, what our companions are; because men who live together in close contact and communion mould each other as iron sharpeneth iron. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Do you believe in the truth of such texts when you hear them?

What I should fear most about it, is not that you doubt their truth in any way, but that very often you go on as almost all men have such a wonderful facility in going, without any thought of squaring your common life according to the standard of such maxims. It never occurs, very possibly, to many of you to consider the vital importance of the questions which these maxims were meant to keep before your minds. You are drawn, perhaps, to one another by certain likings, or you are repelled by certain dislikes, and the younger among you, at any rate, very often think little more of it than this. But this you know is not all, and it might be a gain to some amongst us if they learned these maxims by heart, and considered them as a phylactery intended to be worn for our daily use.

It is probable, indeed, that we should all direct our life and choose our companionship more carefully if we duly considered the long results of these things, if we remembered that in moral relations, as in other matters, it is not

easy to start afresh when we please, and unencumbered. But in a society like ours there is hardly a question which could be named more vital than that of the companionship in which you live, simply because you have no choice whether you will live close to one another or not. The waves of influence are passing from one character to another every day, and you could hardly live an isolated life if you tried to do so. In fact there is scarcely a boy amongst you who does not find his life running in a channel largely directed and influenced by some friend or some companion. The spread of tastes, ideas, and habits is unceasing; and in a young community like ours it is apt also to be very quick. Charged as I am with God's message to every one of you, and having to bear the responsibility of the welfare of every boy who comes amongst us, I am bound to press upon you, even the youngest of you, to consider this as your own question; and I would have every one ask himself about his companionship and about his friendship, and what it is they are doing for him, and what he himself is doing through such means for him whom he calls his friend.

Almost any of you, looking back, will be able to see how in some respect or other, in thought or language, in work or conduct, his life has altered in its character or aim from term to term through the effects of some companionship. Looking with anxious eyes, as we your

masters cannot but look if we are duly impressed by the importance of every fresh turn which your young souls are taking, if we feel the value of your everlasting lives which are already beginning to assume their enduring and possibly unalterable shapes, if we are possessed by any sense of our responsibility towards you, we have it before us as our first duty to do all we can for good influence among you, and to guide you right if you will only be guided. Very often it happens to me to notice companionship and intimacy changing, and your ways changing with this change; and I know, of course, that new influences are at work upon you. Sometimes we see friends growing in company stronger continually in all truth and manliness and high character; we see how one boy may be a blessing and a help to another in all that tends to a true Christian life. Very happy is the manhood which has such a retrospect. But sometimes, too, it may be seen how friendship is not a road upwards, but downwards. It is no uncommon thing for grown men, and it is no uncommon thing for boys, to travel together in ways of idleness, or sin, or waste, where they would not have gone alone.

What, then, are the seeds which your friendships are sowing in your life? what are the influences which you are thus imbibing or spreading? The influences which the ordinary members of any society have upon each other are for the most part stronger

than any outside influence which could be named. Thus some of you have a power perhaps over the lives of those around you, which you hardly know or realize, and of which it may be that you are not worthy. I pray that this influence of your common life may be such as I would fain see it, and that the best of those among you may remember how great their influence is, and remembering this may direct it to the highest and purest ends.

The teachings of your masters day by day, earnest, anxious, sympathetic, and prayerful though they be, are very likely weak beside this; words of mine in this place or elsewhere very possibly have but little effect in comparison with it. Inside this chapel there are certain holy influences, and you feel them, no doubt, or they will come to you some day, if you do not feel them now, as your thoughts return from afar to this home of your boyhood. In your class-rooms also every day there are influences which work upon you for great and good ends, for it is not possible that earnest masters should labour and live among you without making some mark, and God does not take His Holy Spirit away from us; with many of you, too, I do not doubt that the feeling of God's presence, the grateful recollection of the love of Christ, the sense of duty to yourselves, to your parents, to us, to your school, and the ideas of conduct which it is our desire and aim to impress upon you, are not without their guiding and restraining force. Yet if some of you com-

pare all these with what you owe to your friend or your companion who sits beside you, who shares your study, your play, your walks, your conversation, whether it be good or whether it be evil that you learn from him, you will perhaps feel that very often you have allowed him to be stronger than all the rest. Consider it, then, and not lightly or carelessly; and may God guide you into all truth in these matters, so that your common life may be a bond to draw you nearer always to the love of Christ.

As "iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Let me just remind you, then, that your friendships here, as in all other places, though nowhere perhaps so much as here, are two-edged tools, which may open up for you the way to life or the way to death. I often have occasion to remind you that our religious life springs out of our affections and tastes, rightly purified, directed, and sanctified; and if this be so, just consider how great a help your common friendships may be towards elevating and strengthening your life. Two friends who are true to their noblest and best impulses, whose affection is based upon mutual respect, whose intercourse tends always to stir them to higher views and firmer purpose, become a source of mutual strength and support and encouragement in all good things. If so used, your love for a friend on earth helps you on to the love of Christ in heaven: "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee."

There is no more certain support to the weak or the young than the feeling of nearness to some friend whom they know to be strong and pure, earnest for what is right and a hater of all evil. Our companionship with such an one is like living continually in a pure and healthy pasture, and is the nearest earthly resemblance to walking with God in Christ, as we hope in our perfection to walk with Him hereafter.

But then it is impossible to forget how often friendship is turned to purposes far different from this. Too often it happens that friendship is only the means of introducing your friend to some new knowledge of sin or folly. If it were to come to confession, many of you would probably feel obliged in all truthfulness to say that you owe your knowledge of any idle ways into which you may ever have slipped, or any evil with which you may have become acquainted, far more to some so-called friend than to any other source, and it is a very bitter curse that he lays upon himself who opens the eyes of his friend to the knowledge of new evil, or teaches him to yield to any new folly.

It has been wisely said that God mercifully hedges most sins round with many barriers; and we on our part should be very careful how we in any degree become instruments for pulling down what in His mercy He has set up. The young are apt to live, and speak,

and act thoughtlessly; but is it too much to ask that you will put before you distinct landmarks beyond which you will allow no thoughtlessness and no influence to carry you? And let one of the very first and chief of these landmarks be, as it ought to be, that you will use no friendship, no companionship, no community of life, for any purpose which is not holy and good and manly. It is a great deal to ask, no doubt; but we may not ask for less than this, because it is on the strength of this principle amongst us, it is on the indispensable sense of honour in regard to our companions and their life, as also on our self-respect as regards ourselves, that the healthiness, the tone, and the direction of our society must chiefly depend. If any boy here shuts his eyes to this; if he delights in idleness or wickedness, and spreads the love or knowledge of anything that is bad amongst his companions, he is just pulling down the barriers by which God hedges you from sinful ways, he is stripping off the armour in which God has clothed you as a defence against evil; in plain words, any such member of your society, should there be any such, is doing the devil's proper work. If any one among you should happen to be acting thus, and it is always possible that in your youth, and thoughtlessness and ignorance of consequences, you may have lent yourself in some such way as Satan's instrument, let me ask that you will resolve henceforth to sow nothing

around you which can be called in any sense a seed of evil influence. Is this again too much to ask? I cannot think that God will be content with less than this from any one of us. You fancy, perhaps, that it does no harm to talk of idle ways or bad habits, and you forget, or you have not noticed, that by doing this you are breaking down two of the safeguards which God has given us as a check against the spread of evil—ignorance and shame. It is a great blessing to grow up ignorant of evil things, and it is a sad day for any of you when you have learned to talk of them without any shame. We cannot be too late in making acquaintance with evil; and we may be quite certain that the breeze which brings to us the knowledge of that which is bad is no breeze of health, but is laden with poison and death, and that it comes from beneath. Have you any friend who will teach you to know, or to talk of, or to dwell upon things which are not good or wholesome, things which would not bear the sunlight? Then let no attractions, no good qualities, no apparent virtues, deceive you about him—his companionship is not safe. And it is nothing less than cowardice to endure companionship which you hate or despise, and I think there are not many of you who would be content to own this name of coward.

But I fear that there may be too many who are not sufficiently careful to declare themselves on the

side of that which is good, and to brand with their contempt whatever is different from this. Every day the interests of your society, the eternal welfare of the young and the weak around you, the duty you owe to those who are to follow you, are calling in the Name of the God of heaven, "Who is on my side?" And if I judge these things correctly, you are bound to remember that only those are giving the right answer who are brave and true enough to stand forth as pillars for the weaker to lean upon, who are always ready to befriend and to guide those who are young or in danger, and who are earnest in trampling out any influence which may tend towards evil. These are the true servants of Christ, and they only have the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. It is to such as these that we look for health amongst us to-day, and for our good name hereafter.

II.

LOVE WORKETH NO ILL TO HIS NEIGHBOUR.

And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.—ROMANS xiii. 9, 10.

THIS quality of love, or charity as it is often called in our English Bible, is the crowning virtue of Christian life. It may almost be described as the special virtue of the New Testament doctrine. Our Lord Himself puts it into a brief injunction as that which comprehends and sums up all His teaching: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." And here, in this passage to the Romans, St. Paul dwells upon it as the great fundamental principle, embracing all the statutes of that law which points out to men the narrow path of an upright life: "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Such is the description of it; and here also is the injunction which he gives us concerning it: "Owe no man anything, but to love

one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Now it must be obvious enough to all of us that this love which is the fulfilling of the law, though it happens to be described here in negative language as that which worketh no ill to his neighbour, is no mere negative quality. It means something very different from mere abstinence from evil, it could never be described by any number of "thou-shalt-nots." It is clear enough that it means some principle, some spring of feeling or action, which makes true obedience to statutes possible for men. In fact, when we come to consider it, we find that it implies motives, feelings, convictions about the relation of one man to another, of every man to all other men, which the world has been very slow in learning, which as individuals even the best of us learn in a most imperfect and rudimentary fashion, whilst the great mass of every society can scarcely be said to have learned them at all, as a lesson of their own spiritual and moral life. In old time it was in direct contradiction to many prevalent and deeply-rooted notions; I am not sure that it is so very different even now.

Men could not learn this lesson about the great debt of universal love, about loving their neighbours as themselves, till they had learned that other most fundamental of all lessons, in which this one lies enfolded, the lesson which declares the oneness of all the human race, the

equality of all men in the sight of God, Who loves them all, as all bearing the stamp of His Fatherhood upon them, as all breathed into with one Divine Spirit.

The Jew of the Old Testament had learned a sort of elementary introduction to this teaching. Even the very language which our Lord and St. Paul employ, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the language of the Pentateuch. But then, as they use it they make it instinct with meaning which is entirely new. It had not occurred to the Jew to apply it beyond the circle of his own nationality: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself among thine own people." The parable of the Good Samaritan is the great comment to show us how he had failed to see the fundamental meaning of it. So, too, when St. Paul teaches that God is no respecter of persons he is using a Jewish phrase, but it also was read with blind eyes, and had to wait for the Apostle to take it up and give it a new sense, teaching men that God sees in all alike, Jew and Samaritan, Greek or Barbarian, bond or free, none of these distinctions to which men have given such widely prevailing names, but He sees in them only His own children born equally of one common human stock, and heirs without any difference of Divine possibilities.

This, then, is the very primary lesson of all our learning, that we are all, not merely you and I and the rest of our creed or nation or colour, but all men who

claim the attribute of humanity are common children of one God, members of one family, in one brotherhood with Christ Jesus, to be linked through all futurity in one unbroken bond.

But you may ask, Why dwell upon these generalities? it is enough for me if I can love those that are round about me. The answer is that you will never attain to this true, this ever-enduring, this impersonal love of those lives which touch you day by day, unless your soul has become penetrated by the root-feeling which feeds it all. And whenever we try to probe the matter to the bottom we are sure to find the root and foundation of all the true, real, unalloyed love which moves in us for our fellow-men to be this primary fact, that we for whom Christ died, Himself also one of us, are all of one kin, all sons and daughters of our Father in heaven. Lose this consciousness, destroy it in any way, drop it out of your life and turn your back upon it, and you have made a fair beginning towards destroying, as far as your part goes, that fundamental bond of all common kindly human love, which keeps the present world in some degree bright and pure and unselfish, and which brightens also for us our hope of immortality.

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." So the great Apostle endeavours to stir us to live the fruitful ideal life, echoing in varied phrase the Saviour's chief

injunction to us, and in the fulfilment of which He Himself lived and died.

Thus we are all born to this notion of absolute and universal human equality, as all of one family, the sons of one God and one Father. We learn very early to confess our mutual debt of human love, our lips are framed to it from the cradle upwards; and yet we learn it very imperfectly. Turn where we may, it seems as if half the forces which are at work in life were directed to the cancelling of this lesson about love of our neighbour, and the debt of self-sacrifice which we owe to him. This idea of fundamental equality and literal brotherhood, is, as it would seem, a very hard one to accept in its fulness. We are continually allowing it to be written over or blotted out of our souls by the antagonistic influences of crooked traditions, foolish notions about aristocracies and social grades, about superior and inferior races, and so forth; and we partly succeed, we do limit and stifle and destroy the feeling in our souls, some with more some with less success, but all, I fear, to some extent, and all of us to our great personal cost. In every field of life, whether political, social, or individual, you may trace the strong working of these counter influences. We read it written in large characters, characters graven deep in the world's history from far-off primæval times, as we look to affairs now passing in the east of Europe, or even in the neighbouring country of France; we feel

its working in our own lives, in the class distinctions we have inherited, in the foolish and narrow prejudices that pass current in every society. Yet thanks to this teaching of the Saviour and His Apostles it cannot prevail entirely. Though this lesson of common brotherhood is hard to learn in its fulness, it is a harder matter still to forget it altogether. Once uttered and once taught, as Christ taught it by His word and life and death, it is not possible that it should ever again be forgotten by men. They may neglect and partly disregard it every day generation after generation, century after century, but it dogs and haunts us through all our long neglect of it, a Divine irrevocable word which is quite sure of its fulfilment before the great day of God is ended.

If you wish, then, to live the larger human life which is shadowed forth in this commandment about loving your neighbour as yourself, which is bodied forth in actual perfection and completeness in the life of Christ, bridging over the gulf which but for that one life would seem to lie dark and fathomless and impassable between the human and the Divine; if, I say, you wish to make any approaches to such a life as this, then you must let your souls lie open, to be permeated, to be suffused, to be enlarged and enriched, and made truly and divinely human by this elementary and yet transforming thought and conviction that you are born to a real practical

brotherhood with all other men, as common sons of one God and Father.

Here is one great lesson of the sacrifice of Christ. When we fail in our mutual duties (and which of us does not fail?) our shortcomings will very often be found traceable to our imperfect appreciation of this one truth, if we endeavour to trace them to the fountain-head. We cannot fulfil the statute law unless we are moved and inspired by this feeling of what we owe to our neighbour, and of the bond which unites us so closely to every one who is born into the world.

I press this universal truth because we need the strength which it gives for doing adequately our daily part in the humble duties of our common life. Learn this, and these words about love working no ill to his neighbour will become eloquent unto you with many a check and many a warning and many a stimulus. "How so?" it may be asked; "we are not cruel, we are not regardless of the good of others, we are not barbarians, making sport of others' pain. Which of us would work any ill to his neighbour?" So we speak and think almost without exception, I imagine.

And yet many of us who would on no account do any positive ill to any one of our fellows, nevertheless do a great deal of it indirectly, thoughtlessly, unconsciously. Sometimes our example injures, far more frequently indeed than most of us imagine; sometimes our want

of thought and due consideration injures. Very often our self-indulgence injures, when it leads us, as it is so apt to lead us, with plausible and false enticements to follow our own feelings, likings, and theories, without regard to their effect on others. Our vanity, too, and our self-will, are continually injuring, prompting us as they do to forget humility, to fling patience overboard, to ignore time and circumstance, to act simply with a view to making an impression or gratifying our pride. In so far as we fail in any of these particulars we are offending against this law of love which worketh no ill to his neighbour.

And the more we consider it, the more we try to live up to it, the more we feel that it is a very wide and comprehensive rule, this about working no ill. I doubt if any of us could follow it through even a very few of the daily turnings of our life without finding much to regret and repent of. We indulge, perhaps, in something which we feel or imagine (sometimes very possibly being entirely wrong in this supposition or feeling, but which at any rate we feel or imagine) to be harmless as far as we are concerned, whereas it might alter our view entirely if we only thought of it as possibly poisonous to some one else. Or we go on our daily round simply pursuing our own pleasure or interest, or if we help others at all, or regard them, looking only where some personal preference draws us, and only here or there.

If we stayed our hand, and stood still now and then to consider whether this fits with that love which is the fulfilling of the law, it would very likely make our life a new thing, and altogether different.

This love which fulfils the law, doing all good and no evil, a very different quality, it must be remembered, from all the sentimental travesties of it which are very often only self-indulgence finely gilded, subtly disguised; this love, this law of love, let us call it, works always in close and inseparable connection with the complementary laws of duty and self-denial. These three cannot be divided from each other. If at any time, while you fancy yourself growing in love and fine feeling for all things human, in pure taste and high purposes, you have still to confess that duty is as hard a word as ever, and that your soul shrinks from it, and that you turn away from acts of self-denial with a certain softness which you cannot bring yourself to conquer, then I warn you to take care that your fancy is not misleading you. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and *so* fulfil the law of Christ." "Endure hardness, as good servants of Jesus Christ." "Look not every one on his own things, but every one also on the things of others." "The love of Christ constraineth us;" and the lesson of that love is that we learn to do the thing which is right and which is good for our fellow-men, whether we like it or not. Our power of doing this is the mark of our Christian progress.

The only sure and certain sign of any growth in life or character worthy to be counted as progress or improvement is that growth in moral strength which makes duty and self-denial easier and pleasanter, and that widening of sympathy which makes our acts of love and care and thought to be spread all around us without partiality, without distinction, without respect of persons. Above all, this truly Divine quality of love for our fellow-men will make us not only incapable of causing them to suffer for our pleasure, but very quick also to see and feel their suffering, very anxious to heal it.

It is this quick feeling which makes the thought of the world's sin so heavy a burden to some men, whilst they pray that it may be lessened, and strive to lessen it. It is this which makes all those sights and sounds of ignorance, misery, and debasement that meet us in the poverty-stricken, sin-blighted lanes and alleys of our great cities so burdensome and so distressing to some of us. It is this quick sympathy for others' suffering and misfortune which will be the stimulus to you if you are to spend your life for any noble ends. And it ought to be working among you every day even now. And there is daily opportunity; for though we talk of the sad sights to be met with in the homes of poverty, vice, or ignorance, I know few sights more painful in all the world than that of a young face bearing the

mark of sorrow, suffering, or unhappiness, which, in place of the natural brightness of youth, has no answering look when it meets another, but one of shrinking or gloom or wretchedness.

We may see this sometimes in our own as in any other society. The work of Christ is at our door whenever we are desirous to do it. If there be any one who can see any of such things and yet lift no hand to help, and do nothing to cure and alleviate, the love of Christ is not in him.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and *so* fulfil the law of Christ." If ever you see in your neighbour the downcast, suffering, timid look, that unmistakable air which marks so often the first apprenticeship to hardness, the beginning of the death of finer feelings, does it strike you to show kindness, to administer comfort or ensure protection? Does it not sometimes rather happen that you help to break the bruised reed, that you show contempt or indifference when you should show loving-kindness, or that you even join in mocking or cruelty when you ought to have put your heel upon it?

"Do as you would be done by" is only a low form of practical maxim, growing but indirectly out of this law of human love, but even this is very often higher than our practice. Does it never happen that any of you get your pleasure out of annoyance to another? Does it never happen that you allow this to be done by some

one near you? Does a stranger coming amongst us young, inexperienced, or it may be with some peculiarity, never find his life made miserable by some cruel, or hard, or low-toned neighbour?

Think of these and such-like questionings, and set your answer side by side with the injunction that claims to be the Christian's rule of life: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

III.

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen.—PSALM cvi. 48.

I FEEL at all times a certain delicacy in approaching any subject that bears on what we may call the demonstrative part of our religion, because I cannot but remember that it is very easy to acquire, nay, that at this time there is frequently no small risk of acquiring, a kind of demonstrative, sensational, and even fervid religious habit, which exercises no corresponding regenerative influence on the springs of the moral life.

Again, I cannot forget how sensitive, how delicate our spiritual nature is, how easily it may be wounded, or dulled, or spoiled, how easily its growth may be distorted or even stopped altogether; and therefore it is that I abstain from speaking too often of some things which yet require to be spoken of, lest this continual speaking should cause you to think too lightly of most solemn subjects, or blunt the fine edge of any spiritual affection, or harden any heart instead of softening it. Much as I may feel some of our defects and shortcomings in

regard to our religious life, I should feel still more deeply some others which might rise in their places. And amongst the things that I do not like to reiterate too often, for these and for other reasons, is the subject on which I am now about to speak to you,—your share in the public worship of God.

There is probably no other duty which the young (which I fear also many full-grown men) perform so carelessly and so thoughtlessly. It has been so familiar to all of us from our infancy, that we are apt to come to it without feeling that we are treading on sacred ground. The tongue utters the familiar words, the ear hears, or scarcely hears, the well-known sounds, and the inattentive soul is not recalled from its various wanderings. When one sees the absent look, the vacant eye, or the listless attitude, which are too often to be seen; when one hears the languid, drowsy, mechanical response to the minister's prayer, or when there is almost silence where that response ought to swell up to the throne of Heaven, it is impossible to suppose that all hearts are joining in prayer to Him in Whose house we are met to pray. These are not the marks of souls engaged in any sincere or earnest devotion. And yet it is for such devotion, and for nothing else, that men profess to assemble in God's house. Shall we plead guilty, then, of coming into the very presence of the Almighty, professing to do what we there leave undone? Is this

stamp of unreality to be put on the service of prayer and praise which we are bold enough to offer? Are our holiest things to be marked as counterfeit? These may sound to some of you strong or even harsh questions, yet they are questions which deserve to be weighed by every one who would offer unto God an honest and acceptable worship. And such worship, I trust, nay, I feel certain, we all pray that ours may be.

There is no sight to me more impressive or more stirring than that of a congregation really in earnest about their prayers and praises. I know no sound or music to be compared with the swelling murmur of prayer as it rises from the lips of a worshipping multitude. We cannot mistake such a sight or such a sound, simply because it bears the stamp of true and real interest. Further, we cannot join in such a service without being ourselves touched and moved by it. We feel how different our own solitary prayer is from this united voice of many hearts uplifted in joint supplication. At such a time we provoke one another to good works, to good resolves; then our feelings are kindled by contact with other feelings, our hearts are stirred, our affections are purified, we are cheered, we are warmed and elevated, we are changed for the time into living members of the communion of saints.

Under such influences we forget all differences which keep men asunder, and are conscious only of the strength

of that bond which binds all to Christ. Ill feelings, quarrels, prejudices, sink at such a time down to their proper littleness, and we feel to our fellows as men should feel when they pray to God to forgive them their trespasses, as they forgive those who trespass against them. It is in such companionship that our life may be said to come nearest to that state which St. Paul describes as hid with Christ in God; thus we realize that the purity and earnestness of holy aspirations, which make up the life of the saints in heaven, is not altogether impossible even for us in the midst of our sins and shortcomings.

But if all this be true of a congregation where earnestness and devotion spread sympathetically from one spirit to another till the spirits of all grow fervent; if these are the results to be expected from joining heart and soul in the worship of God, what shall we say of that which is, it must be confessed, far more common, a congregation nominally assembled to pray to the Lord of heaven and earth, but praying without earnestness, as they live, it is to be feared, without a sense of His presence, and turning this most solemn duty into mere lip-service? In such a congregation, instead of each one cheering, stirring, enkindling his neighbour's feelings, instead of every man aiding his fellow-man, so that their prayers rise on the wings of each other's

ence, and join with a rash thoughtlessness in a mere mockery of worship, which it is obvious to all of us that God cannot and will not accept. Every such careless worshipper, every one who takes no earnest part in those prayers in which he professes to be joining, every one who, instead of following the service with fixed attention and in reverent, prayerful attitude, lets his thoughts wander anywhither, and composes himself in some indolent, drowsy fashion, is deadening those sacred influences on which his own soul depends for its salvation, and is doing an injury to those around him by hindering them, in some degree, from doing what he himself is neglecting to do. Many a thoughtless attendant in God's house would never allow himself to be so careless or so thoughtless if he realized the harm which he may thus be doing to others as well as to himself; or if he duly considered how solemn a thing it is to kneel in the presence of God and offer prayers unto Him.

Indeed, not in this only, but in all our life we may say that thoughtlessness is at the root of many of our common misdoings. Most of the faults which you commit would probably not be committed at all if only you would stop to reflect. And it is one of the special duties of your early life, it is a principal part of your Christian education, to root out faults of this kind. And if you are to do this in all your life, surely you must begin by doing it in life's most sacred duties.

The earnest and thoughtful character is the one at which we have to aim, it is that which takes the first place among men as the true type of Christian manliness; and for this character no sure foundation can be laid without a habit of real earnest prayer, and of reverence for sacred duties and holy things.

And of all our holy things we have to keep the most careful watch over those which are most familiar. If we tread every day on sacred ground, we are apt to forget its sacred character. If solemn words are taken lightly and thoughtlessly on the tongue, think you that such rash handling of holy things can be otherwise than displeasing to Him Who is surrounded by awe and majesty, in Whose presence the very angels veil their faces, and Who has Himself declared that He will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him?

Some may, perhaps, be tempted to ask why, at a fixed time day by day or week by week, you should be called upon to offer always the same prayers, and some may be ready to say that it is impossible always to command the thoughts and lift up the heart in serious supplication; but I would ask, and I ask it in all confidence, who is there that has really tried who will venture to say this? It is an excuse often made, but worth nothing; for those who endeavour to keep their life always directed towards God will find it easy to pray to Him at all times, whilst, on the other hand, there is

no habit into which men more easily fall, there is none which exercises a more deadening influence, than that of not praying sincerely and from the heart. If you feel this to be gaining any hold upon you, I would urge you to struggle against it in all seriousness. I pray that you may be delivered from it; for, should you allow yourselves to grow up torpid, sluggish, indifferent in your spiritual exercises, you will find that you have saddled yourselves with a burden which will some day cause you bitter grief, which will leave you a prey to demoralizing influences, hampering and clouding intellect and spirit alike, and which may perhaps shut you out finally from the kingdom of heaven. Without prayer our soul in fact cannot live, this is its necessary food; and through it chiefly we have to look for the help of God's Holy Spirit. The Psalmist concludes his song of prayer and praise with the exhortation "that all the people should say Amen." The Apostle bids us to "pray without ceasing," and be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Shall we then go on our way as if these injunctions had never come to us? Shall we live in the midst of spiritual influences, and not allow them to penetrate within us? You would all alike say, God forbid; for there is not one of us but is ready to cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

All that I have said on this subject applies, of course, both to old and young. But to you it should come

with far more force than to any others; for to you it is especially important, whilst you are still forming the habits of life. Most seriously, then, I would ask you to consider the danger of acquiring anything like evil, careless, or indifferent habits in the sacred duties of God's service.

Fortunately for yourselves you come to this service as a matter of course, there is no question whether you come or not; you are happily saved from the temptation, which might otherwise draw you away from the worship of God altogether, and which does, in fact, draw away some men on the most flimsy pretexts.

So that the question for you to consider is not *whether* you will worship God in common prayer, but *how* and in what manner you are to worship Him? And you know well of what sort that worship must be if it is to have any value. In the ordinary things of life you recognise concentration and earnestness as indispensable conditions of success. When you join in play or recreation you join in it heart and soul, your energies, your thoughts, your attention are all given to it; when you are employed in the common work of your daily task you bend your whole mind to it if you wish to succeed; and all I ask is that you should regulate your religious services by the same rule of sound sense, that you should be as earnest in the worship of God as you are in the work or the amusement which you follow most heartily.

To allow wandering thoughts and foolish imaginations to occupy you is at the best a waste of time; it is very often a most sinful waste. When you wish for success, as I have said, you bend all your energies to the means for securing it; you know that there must be no dallying, no trifling, no idling. And if in other things, much more in devotion should you be guided by this feeling. Your work may perhaps bear some fruit, even if you are not very earnest about it, though you may be quite sure it will not bear much. But your devotion is from the nature of the case utterly worthless, it has no value at all in the sight of Him to Whom you offer it, if it is not real and genuine. If, then, you feel that there is truth in these words, and if they have touched at all upon any fault in your worship, try this experiment. Let me ask you to resolve that your prayers shall be hearty, shall be, in fact, what they profess to be—real prayers, real petitions addressed in earnest to a real and living God. Only do this, and it will not be long before you begin to feel something of the blessedness of those who are being drawn nearer to their Maker in body and soul alike. To all who thus strive life assumes a new and nobler aspect. And there is no one who, if he persevere in such a course, will not in this world win daily an abundant recompense, and receive at last the reward of those who worship the Lord with a true and holy worship.

IV.

SUNDAY.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."—EXODUS xx. 8.

VERY few, I imagine, grow up from childhood to manhood without at some time or other feeling a difficulty about the proper observance of Sunday. And as this difficulty probably occurs to some of you from time to time, I wish to say one or two words on the subject, which may, I trust, help to guide you, and perhaps save some of you from the reaction which is apt to come under certain circumstances. In the first place, we ought to keep it clear in our minds that the day should be a holy one to us, that it ought to hold a peculiar place in our thoughts and feelings as a day in some special sense marked out for spiritual purposes, and so to be set apart in our lives as different, somehow, from the rest; as being, in fact, specially intended to keep our souls open to heavenly influences. We are in some degree conscious, I imagine, of this its use and its purpose for us when we call it the Lord's Day.

At the outset, then, let me remind you that whatever differences of opinion there may be among Christians

as to some of the grounds on which Sunday observances are inculcated, or as to the way in which the day ought to be kept, or the extent to which it ought to be different from other days, how far we ought to abstain from what on other days we do, how far it is our duty to exclude from our life and thoughts everything which is not of a religious character—and differences of opinion among different classes of Christians and in different countries are very great on some of these points—yet, I say, whatever these differences may be, there is one thing about which there is no difference at all among those who have any regard for the spiritual welfare of mankind, or any true appreciation of the dangers to which human life is exposed. All true Christians are agreed that we ought not to think for a moment of taking away from this day its peculiar or sacred character.

The mantle of holiness should be wrapped around all our thoughts and feelings concerning it. The first association suggested by its name should be that it stands alone among the days, that it is dedicated in some higher and more direct sense than the others to that which we call our spiritual life. I should suspect any ordinary man of either secret wickedness, or indifference, or of blind and presumptuous folly, who would treat this day as of no use or moment, as one which he could dispense with and blot out of his life. No man who has any notion of what our spiritual life

ought to be, or of what it will probably grow to be some day, will ever allow himself to forget that this day comes round to us week by week as an unwearying reminder of the invisible things that are about us, and to give us fresh glimpses, through our crass atmosphere, of the golden gates of heaven. And so I trust that, whatever betide, you will never throughout your life part with this fundamental principle that we are bound in some sense or other to make this a holy day, for the simplest but most binding of all reasons, that we are not yet fit to do without it, and that if we think we can so dispense with it now, it is very probable that such fitness will never come.

Having grasped this principle of the necessity of the day to us, there are some common misunderstandings from which it may be well that you should be kept clear. And I feel the more anxious about this, because these misunderstandings are so very liable to lead you into great mischief.

Many men think they are under a yoke and a bondage in regard to this day's observance, which in reality God has not laid upon them, and the result is not that they bear the yoke, not that they submit to the bondage, but that they believe in its Divine character and yet shrink from it; they recognise it, and yet avoid it, and thus do a very grievous wrong to their moral nature.

It is a melancholy use to make of this holy day if we go on from week to week sinning against our consciences in regard to the way in which we spend it. If we believe that on it God bids us shut up our thoughts and actions in certain channels in which we yet do not shut them up; if we believe that on this day He commands us to abstain and keep away from things which we do not abstain from in spite of this belief; if we have been taught that He lays this yoke upon us, and believe it, and yet stealthily refuse to carry the yoke, while outwardly we seem to be carrying it; if we think that He has forbidden us on this day certain enjoyments or pursuits which on other days are innocent, and yet in spite of our inward monitor indulge in these things, what is this but turning a sacred ordinance into an occasion of falling? What is it but acting over again that primæval scene by the tree of knowledge, which means to us the birth of the human conscience and the breaking of its law? And conscience is a thing far too sacred for us to deal lightly with it in any way. It were better for you to do anything almost than sin against this voice within you. And hence it is that we should do well to realize the liberty which God has given us in regard to the observance of a day like Sunday, as indeed in regard to all other things, while we cling with the tenacity of an undying affection to

We may remember, then, that it is not the Jewish Sabbath which we are keeping Sunday by Sunday. In reading the fourth commandment as part of our Sunday service we recognise the principle of a sabbatical observance; we thereby confess that we feel ourselves bound to some such observance as this. But the Sabbath of the Jews was done away in Christ. It is easy to see why God laid this command upon them. They were so ignorant and unspiritual, so dull of perception with regard to all Divine things, and so degraded in their tendencies, that they required to be taught the very rudiments of true worship. Thus we see how natural it was that they should be commanded to set apart a certain time absolutely and entirely as a day of special observance, as a day in the silence of which the idea of God and His Fatherly love might sink into their souls and take firm possession of them. Had they been told simply that they must consecrate all their thoughts and efforts to Jehovah, that He must reign in their hearts day by day and every day, and that their life ought to be one continuous worship of Him, very likely the result would have been that they would never have worshipped Him at all, and that they would have forgotten His presence far more completely than they did forget it.

The sabbatical ordinance was one which their condition required, and in so far as our condition is still like

theirs we also still require an ordinance analogous to that. Yet it is not the Jewish Sabbath that we keep. When Christianity was first preached among men, it was clearly expected that Sabbaths would be no longer necessary. From the time when Christ died and gave to all mankind the new foundation of their life, and when St. Paul preached the new law of love to Christ and Christian liberty, it is clear enough that the Jewish ordinance on this subject was considered to be no longer a law literally binding. It is evident that St. Paul himself expected this Gospel, which he preached and which had possessed his whole being, and filled him with an almost perpetual consciousness of the presence and the love of God, to work such a change in the hearts of men, so to regenerate Christian society, that a stern and prohibitory Jewish commandment would be no longer necessary.

It seems to me impossible for any unprejudiced reader of the New Testament to come to any other conclusion than this, that there was no law laid down for the Gentile Christians as to the observance of special days, and just for the reason which I have already indicated, that such special observance, it was hoped, would not now be necessary. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, only let us first be very sure that we have this Holy Spirit. If we take our stand upon this principle, and without a doubt it is the

Christian principle, we are bound to be careful not to use our liberty for any cloak of maliciousness. "See, then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." St. Paul's idea is not difficult to read when we hear him saying, "Let no man judge you in respect of meat or of drink, or of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ;" or again, when he says, "One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." In the earlier portion of these statements he seems to me to be saying, with unmistakable plainness, that the Christian principle supersedes the Jewish law. But we should take special note of the words which he adds to this declaration, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." So again, in another connection, he says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." In expressions of this sort he enunciates a principle which cannot lead us far wrong; a principle which will last as long as human nature itself, a law which will never be broken. We must be fully convinced in our own mind; whatsoever is not of faith is sin. And I cannot suppose that the Apostle, after speaking thus about the observance of Jewish days, after thus vindicating the principle of Christian liberty, and thus asserting that Jewish ordinances were out of date, a shadow of things which

had already come, should, after all, only have meant that the Sabbath and its rules were to be transferred from the Saturday to the Sunday, from the seventh day to the first. Nay, it is no transferred Sabbath which we are keeping to-day; it is a new ordinance, an ordinance to you and me sacred and inviolable, standing here in the midst of the Church's customs and rules as at once a sad confession and a truthful witness that we are not yet what we shall be, that we are not what the Apostle expected that we would be. St. Paul had visions, no doubt, of a Christian society in which the Spirit of Christ would be so strong and potent, in which fervour, and purity, and high purpose, and faith, and love, would so prevail in men's minds every day, that distinctions of days would be necessary no more, even if they were any longer possible; but instead of that the world has seen the history of the Christian Church, and we are only too conscious of our own imperfect and sinful state, and our continual need of these helps.

Let us then not be either superstitious or irreligious in regard to this matter. If I read the Bible correctly there is not laid down in it any strict and unvarying rule about the observance of this day, any rule, that is, which binds us as the Jews were bound by their commandment; but this only means that we should be all the more careful in making for ourselves a rule which

shall be wholesome and good, and in accordance with the principle which binds us still.

We have only to view for a moment our own imperfect life; we have only to try and realize what that life would become without this recurring day of calm, and rest, and quiet communing with God, and we know at once that we are not fit to dispense with the Divine ordinance.

If, then, the utility of this holy day, if the necessity of it to our souls is thus clear and manifest, if we see and feel the danger and the folly of drifting away from or neglecting this recurring help to our spiritual life, we require, I think, no other argument to prove—I cannot conceive any argument so strong to prove—that it is the will of Him Who made us, and Who would have us to grow to something better than what we are as yet, that we should count this day as holy unto Him, and as a witness of the higher state to which we are slowly travelling. Does it strike you then to ask, And what shall we do if we are thus to keep it?

1. To full-grown and mature Christian men I should answer simply, Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, remembering that whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and act according to that conviction; only remembering, also, that you give no offence in anything, and that no man put a stumblingblock in his brother's way, for that no man liveth to himself.

2. To you in your youth, requiring as it does external rule and guidance, I should say that as now you abstain from ordinary games and ordinary lessons, so you will do well to make it your rule always to keep this day apart from common occupations. It is not that to work is under all circumstances necessarily sinful, but because, without some such rule, the observance could not last; the day cannot be kept holy unless we preserve the external marks of holiness.

And as to your mode of spending this day, I would exhort you, first of all, to try and make it your regular aim to give yourselves with all sincerity and concentration of thought to those services to which our Sundays bring us week by week.

And then as to the other questions which probably rise in your minds about books, or reading, or occupation, I should say to the younger among you, read the books which your parents or your masters give you liberty to read, spend the day as you feel that you are allowed to spend it, and do nothing which makes you uneasy in the matter, or which you dare not confess. To the elder I would say also this, beware that you slip not into careless ways, tempted by any of the conceits of opening manhood; beware above all things that you do no violence to your own conscience, and that you offend not one of these little ones. Compared with all rules about observance these two things are of infinite

importance: *First*, that we should be scrupulous in dealing with our own conscience, that we should listen to it carefully, that we should obey it religiously, even in the smallest matters; for if we once begin to turn a deaf ear to it or treat it lightly, we are poisoning our life at the very fountain. And, *secondly*, we should remember in all things how many there are that are weak around us, and that all these have a claim upon our actions, inasmuch as we influence them for good or for evil.

When you think, then, of liberty, and how you should use it—and regulated liberty is the fundamental principle of our life here—the liberty which assumes as existing among you the spirit of Christian gentlemen—for yourselves you have to take care that in your use of Sundays, as in all other things, it bring you nearer to Christ, nearer in habit, in taste, in affection; and for others you should take heed that this liberty of yours become not in any sense a stumblingblock to the weak, for when ye sin so against the brethren and offend their weak consciences, ye do sin against Christ, and I would not have you so abuse this great and godlike gift of freedom as to make it a means of harm to others or of condemnation to yourselves.

V.

CONFIRMATION.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.—HEBREWS ii. 1.

SOME of you are approaching one of the solemn moments of life. Your thoughts have been turned during the past weeks to that ceremony of to-morrow, in which you will be the chiefs and we the witnesses. You have been preparing in heart and mind for the most solemn act which a man can perform, for the most solemn profession which in this life you will ever make. You are about to take upon you the oath of allegiance to the God of heaven, and to bind yourselves as soldiers of our Saviour Christ; and it is above all things incumbent on us that we come not near to this sacred enrolment in God's great army with a careless step or heart unmoved.

If there be anything of solemnity in our life, if there be times when the deep waters of the soul are stirred as by an angel from heaven, then assuredly this season, in which we approach deliberately step by step, so to speak, to the altar of God, and there register our vow that hence-

forth we are His and not our own, that henceforth we bear in our souls the marks of the Lord Jesus, assuredly this must be a season of serious and solemn thought, of secret prayer and silent meditations, and good resolutions made in the sight of Him Who searches the hearts of all men. You have had spread out, as it were, and laid before you the roll of God's commandments to a Christian man; and now you are about to go calmly, silently, deliberately, and put the seal to all this, and to hear in your hearts the blessing of God on every child of man who strives to serve Him faithfully.

It may be well, therefore, to consider what your preparation has been, for on this depends to a great extent the benefits you will derive from your Confirmation, for without doubt a great portion of the value of this rite consists in its being the culminating point of a period of spiritual impressions. And on this account I said, when you began your preparation, that, by using this period as it should be used, you might so accustom your heart to taking pleasure in things spiritual, and so lay the foundation of good Christian habits, that for all the future a good life will be easier than it has ever yet been, that spiritual things will have a new interest for you and a new attraction, and that you will learn to know by the experience of your own hearts what is meant by the love of God.

And therefore also I exhorted you to seek solitude at

certain times. We live and work and play together; our life here is bound up into one outward whole, until we seem to forget our own individual part of it. Therefore it is that every one should at times retire from the sight of every human eye, and feel that he is alone with God, that he should stand still and meditate and consider what his life is in the sight of Him. We do not look for the voice of the Lord in the rushing wind or the earthquake or the thunder, but in the still small voice which he hears who wraps himself in the mantle of silent prayer and meditation.

If you have used these means of grace you have already experienced some of the benefits of this season, for these exercises and meditations break through the crust which is continually gathering over our life; they make us feel in what way we are going wrong under the influence of the silently growing habit, or by the mere force of mechanical routine or thoughtlessness. In one word, the stagnant waters of our spiritual life are made to run in a pure stream by means of these periods of discipline and spiritual exercise.

These are times for breaking off any habit or connections which we feel to be dragging us down, and making the weight of besetting sin heavier and harder; they are times for learning to do what we may have hitherto shrunk from doing, and for doing cheerfully such duties as hitherto have been done grudgingly or carelessly. If

your life has been influenced in any of these respects by this period, you have been brought at least one step nearer heaven.

Still you must remember that you are as yet only on the threshold of your life, you are only taking up the Cross of Christ, which you will have to carry through trial and temptation, and assuredly you will often feel its weight when the tempter lays hold upon you. This, then, brings us to the danger of failing. Supposing that you have been impressed of late with a sense of the solemnity of the vows which you are about to make; supposing that you have learned to feel what an awful element in the world is the all-pervading influence of sin, and that you have learned to shrink away from its touch, and that you grieve, as you never grieved before, if you have been surprised into it; supposing, moreover, that you feel your heart thrilled and excited by the consciousness of God's Spirit working within you, and of His everlasting arms round about you, even so, it is not enough. You have reached, it is true, a breathing-place, but not a place for standing still; you are as yet only beginning the race which is set before you, and for years to come you will have to give most earnest heed to the things that you have heard, to the resolves that you have made, lest at any time you let them slip. "I count not myself to have apprehended," said St. Paul when he was now a veteran in the service of Christ—"I

count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Let us therefore be so minded.

But even if we are thus minded, if we have drunk of the spirit of the great Apostle, and learned to feel how high and excellent a thing it would be to walk in his steps, how are we to succeed in this?

It is useless to shut our eyes to the fact that a spotless life is not easy; we all know from a humiliating experience that we are not able of ourselves to resist the temptations which beset us. On the one side, it is true, we are created free to choose our own path; God has bestowed upon us the awful privilege of working out our salvation or of bringing on ourselves ruin and death, and at each step of our course we feel that we were not obliged to act thus or thus, and so if we go wrong we cannot escape the condemnation of our own hearts; but yet, on the other hand, failure and weakness compel us to cry, Who is sufficient for these things?

You who are now girding yourselves for the future, and preparing to march forward as soldiers of Christ, do you not feel that there is danger in front of you and danger round about, yea, and danger within you also? Unless you feel this you will march blindly into the pitfalls of sin, and whatever your good resolves and good

intentions may now be, they will melt away before the fiery trials which the world has in store for every one of us. Now, it may be, the ruling influence in every heart is an earnest desire to do right and walk in the ways of purity and goodness; you feel the overshadowing Spirit of God, and you see no attraction in the enticements of sin, and all this is well; but will it always be thus with you? You will come away from offering your vows before God to-morrow, and the stream of your life will begin to run over them: pass on a little while, a few months, a year or two, and where are they? If they should still be found fresh and green and bearing fruit, blessed are ye—happy, thrice happy, will be your case; but in many I fear the world will have made its mark. We know how many, how insidious, how hard are the temptations which come upon us every day, and how nothing in the world can resist them except the hallowing influence of that Spirit which leads our affections to purity and goodness, and disciplines our will to resist the evil.

We know the danger that, when the ceremony of to-morrow is over, you may allow a feeling of reaction to take possession of your heart; and then it is easy to say what follows. The seed of the Spirit of God has been sown there, but it is crushed and trodden down or swept away by the unceasing rush of passion, temper, and desire, turning the fresh soil of the heart into a

hard and beaten path; or pleasures and enjoyments come and fill the heart with their dissipating influences; or you may be pressed by some sudden and sore temptation, and fall, and fall again, till at last you are ashamed to look back on what you once were before all these evils happened unto you. The downward course is very easy.

But these things do not come upon us unawares. We know how weak we are in the presence of temptation, so that we are forewarned, and in common prudence we should be forearmed. We require strength to help us and keep us, and no strength will do this but that which cometh down from on high.

Let, therefore, these words of St. Paul sink into your memory now, and bear fruit in your life hereafter: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore," he says again, "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the

shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." These are the helps which God has given us, and using these we shall not fail.

Let us, then, never cease to use them. Cherish within you fresh and pure affections, cherish an interest in such things as are good and lovely; learn to feel that God is near, and that He is a living Father unto us, and that He desireth not the death of a sinner, but that every one may turn and live.

And if you find this hard at times (as who does not?) if you find that a spirit of coldness comes over you, and that you cannot do the things which you would, turn to God and God's Word for help—"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

On Sunday next we hope to meet at the Lord's Table, and there unite in prayer and praise, and lift up our hearts together to the God from Whom cometh our salvation. There we may drink in fresh supplies of grace, and get new strength to help us in time of need. There we shall meet in true Christian fellowship; you, whose life is beginning, who kneel at that Table for the first time, and we who come again, saddened by ex-

perience and humiliated by failure, to renew our hopes and vows and aspirations, and to pray, in the full confidence that God will hear our prayer, that all we who partake of that Holy Communion may be filled with His grace and heavenly benediction.

Meeting there, let us remember that it is not for once or twice only, but that it marks the beginning of an endless life consecrated for evermore.

VI.

ADVENT.

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.— 2 PETER iii. 11.

THERE are few things which strike us more forcibly as we read the epistles of St. Paul, or passages like this from which I have taken my text, than the intensity of the expectation with which our Saviour's Second Coming was looked for by the first generation of Christians. It is evident that this expectation possessed and engrossed the minds of both the apostles themselves and the disciples generally in a way which we can scarcely comprehend. It was one of the ruling and regenerating motives in their new life. The men of Galilee who had received the Saviour's last commission and witnessed His Ascension, who had turned away from the cloud which hid Him from their sight with the angels' words vibrating in their ears: "Why stand ye here gazing into heaven? This same Jesus Which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven,"—these men, it would appear, lived and prayed and laboured in the con-

tinual expectation that He would come again to them, and speedily, and that this promise would be fulfilled in their own time. Thus He was always at the door of their life; and their attitude was just that in which we listen for every footfall and watch the door that is soon to open when we are waiting for some honoured and expected visitant. And this eager, hopeful belief of theirs laid its strong hand on all their converts; the eye of every Christian was turned upwards every day with a strange sense of expectant awe. The mysterious vault of the sky overhead was to them not an unfathomable immensity peopled with unknown worlds, but the curtain which shut out from their vision the throne of God, and they expected it to open before them at any moment.

Now, as you consider this ever so slightly, you must feel what a marvellous difference such an expectation, so awe inspiring and so engrossing, must have made to their life and spirit. It was, in fact, one of their chief means of grace. It supported them through unparallelled difficulties and suffering, it made them feel all the burdens of this painful life comparatively light because heaven was at their doors, and the reign of Christ was expected shortly to begin. Through the force of this expectancy they were in fact risen with Christ, their thoughts were fixed on things above, their home was at the right hand of God, in a far stronger sense than can be said of any of us.

And it is good for us to think of all this; indeed it comes to us naturally as one of the first thoughts of the Advent season. As we read the history of the Christian Church, we see how the kingdom of God upon earth has grown in ways which were not revealed to the apostles in their time; we have seen how their expectation of Christ's immediate coming was disappointed, and for this reason, because the plan of God's providence is a much larger plan than they conceived it to be. The failure of our expectation and hope in something which turns out to be much greater than our expectation, the disappointment which eventually breaks into a deeper joy, the large result showing us not what we had eagerly looked for, but something else, which comes as if to tell us how feeble and inadequate our conception had been of God's work upon earth, all this reminds us in countless ways how we are in the hands of One Whose plans for our salvation are so vast and so all-embracing that we see them as yet only in part. This unfulfilled apostolic hope, and similar hopes ending similarly generation after generation, ought to have taught us before this a lesson of humility which many of us have not learned as regards our judgments on God's providential dealings. Out of all this we ought to have drawn the lesson of His incomprehensible greatness, and of His omnipresent power in our life girding us round in ways we have not known. But whether we have gained this

or not, we have lost, I fear, very much that attitude of eager, active looking forward, which gave such wonderful life to the faith of St. Paul and his followers, and which was, in fact, a new inspiration unto them.

After the lapse of eighteen hundred years we have learned rather to feel that with the Lord a thousand years are as one day, and that we cannot read the signs of His final coming; but we have lost thereby what was to those who laid the foundation of Christian life among men an all-powerful incentive to absolute and entire devotion to the service of Christ.

Let us see then whether, in spite of this loss, we cannot keep in our life some sense of our nearness to God, which may stir us at least in some degree as they too were stirred. Every day we fall into sinful or unworthy ways because our souls have not been lifted up to any sense of constant communion with Him and of His Divine presence round about us. The virtues of the apostolic time are just those which we ought to be striving after, because they are those in which we are most deficient, which we lack most, and they are, moreover, just the virtues which our Advent exercises are intended to stir and strengthen in us. That was a time which knew no cold indifference, no lukewarmness; and these are just the things that wrap so many of us round, and rob our life of all true energy, making the entrance into it so ready and open for every kind of sin.

And it is easy to see how they were saved from this. The sense of God's presence was upon them as something real, and not merely as an indistinct and shadowy notion. The feeling that the end was very near, and might come as a thief in the night, roused them to a strange fervour. They laboured for Christ as those who heard the continual call in their ears that the time is short. And so they lived for the great and final end, as for an event which was every day close upon them. Now it is to keep something like this dominant in our own life that we celebrate year by year all our Christian seasons; it is for this that we gather Sunday by Sunday in this chapel, and that we keep our Sundays holy, that they may be a sign between our God and us; it is for this, too, that we turn daily to our Bibles for some fresh sparks of the Spirit of God to illuminate and purify our life; and it is for this that every day we come to Him in public and in private prayer. And those of us are happy who have learned thereby to live with the fear of God before them, and the consciousness that He is round about us in the darkness and the light.

If we could grow without knowledge of sin—it sounds, alas! a paradox to make the supposition—but if our life could expand in perfect purity without the dark spots of evil thought, or act, or imagination, upon it, then, it may be, we might live in God's presence a life of unconscious harmony; but placed as we are, and

tainted as our nature is with the infection of sin, our safety from a sinful life must begin in our fear of God and the awe-inspiring sense of our constant nearness to the things which are invisible. It is the sin in our nature which makes the name of God very often a name from which we shrink, and the thought of His nearness a burden. But these feelings are the beginning of our salvation, if we do not allow them to drive us further in hopeless flight from a Presence which we cannot escape. "For He knoweth the way that I take; and when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. For God maketh my heart soft, and it is the Almighty Who troubleth me." Thus it is that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the foundation of a virtuous life. Thus it is that where this fear is wanting men go wrong so easily, and the end is so often deplorable.

Let us try, therefore, to build up our life on a foundation of fear and reverence. Let us catch something, some faint reflection, of that spirit in which men once approached Him of the incommunicable name, and Whom we out of reverence have styled Lord.

Ages and generations differ from each other in their relation to Divine things. Sometimes the fear of God grows and degenerates into a superstitious and slavish fear; sometimes, on the other hand, men seem scarcely to feel that fear at all, and to have lost the sense of awe. And if there is a danger to us here to-day, I suppose

it is the latter danger, and the signs of it are not difficult to read in our life. There are forms of this danger prevalent in other places which I need not dwell on here, because they can hardly be amongst our dangers. Such, for instance, as rash and flippant, irreverent and self-confident, speculation on Divine things, without any sense of their depth and greatness or of their many-sided complexity. But passing over these exercises of a wit that has not learned its own shallowness, and the irreverent vanity of the critical spirit, we have often to check ourselves in our own life in the midst of many a fault which an adequate fear of our heavenly Lord, an adequate sense of His nearness, would render impossible.

If we look first for a moment at our religious services, we feel and see how often we fail because we have imbibed no real or distinct sense of God's attributes, or of His close relation to us, and because we are moved accordingly by no wholesome or soul-stirring awe when we come before Him. Our worship is cold and dead, formal and unreal, in consequence; it does not search out the depths of the soul, and the channel by which the Holy Spirit should enter into our hearts is dried up and ineffective. We should do well to remember more tenaciously the warning of the wise man to keep our foot when we come into the House of God; for it is quite certain that when we come carelessly there is

danger lest we offer the sacrifice of fools. If the fear of God had a regenerating power over us, if the sense of His presence amongst us when we are assembled to worship Him were a living sense, would not our worship declare it more distinctly?

When I feel the cold dulness of a congregation which is not praying around me, I know that the sense of God's nearness is not upon us, as it ought to be, with any life-giving, saving power, and I grieve to think how many among us are thrusting away offered help, turning their backs on the strength that would support them, and positively, by foolish or inert indifference, closing their souls against the influences of the Holy Ghost which are striving in vain to enter into them. Let us strive, then, young and old, masters and boys, all alike, to come before God in prayer, with reverence and godly fear, that we may thus imbibe something of His Spirit, and grow nearer to His likeness.

And then if we pass on from religious duties to our common life, how different it would be with most of us if we had any true feeling of this encircling presence of God. The man or boy who really believes that the God Who will take account of us at the last is very near to us every day and every night, and who has thus learned that the darkness hides us not from Him, will strive, I think, to make all his life of one piece. He will be careful not to live one life in public and another in

private, and to indulge in no habit or practice which he dare not allow the sun to shine upon; for the presence of God is constant sunlight. "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name, for Thou only art holy?" We cannot recall or recover those vivid expectations which filled the soul of the apostolic Christian, because we have learned by a long experience that we know not the end nor what we shall be, and that we cannot read the signs of any millennial time. But we can learn to wait for Him with the feeling of those who are in a holy Presence, and watching daily for that Presence to manifest itself in clearer light and greater glory.

Christ's kingdom is fulfilling itself every day, and the question for you to consider at Advent, as at other times, is whether you are hastening that fulfilment. You are hastening it when you live a god-fearing life, but you are hindering and delaying it whenever you stain your souls with sin.

Let us come round, then, to that which has always been the beginning and the end of every apostolic word on these matters, and look well to our daily steps. Are we moved to ask curious questions? The answer is clear, "What is that to thee? follow thou Me."

We too, like every generation that has gone before us, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let us, then, if we would have our hope

fulfilled, look for these not as coming from far away or breaking forth suddenly, but as springing up in our own souls, and spreading like the leaven through our own society. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that your life may be seen every day to be without spot, and blameless."

PART IV.

I.

THE UNACCOMPLISHED WORK OF SCHOOLS.

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.—1 CORINTHIANS iii. 9.

IT has been our custom on occasions like this* to ask some one from the outer world to come and preach to us on some appropriate subject. To-day, however, it may not be entirely without its uses if we make this half-hour a time for a little self-examination and reflection of a more homely kind than could be suggested to us by a stranger from without.

We who belong to this College have as a general rule much cause for thankfulness; one or two of us who have known our school from its beginnings, and who remember that thirteen years ago this was a place without inhabitants or history or human interest, may feel as others cannot feel that God has dealt very graciously with us, though I think indeed we must all share this feeling in some degree. Twelve years, a long period in

* The Guthrie Commemoration Day, or Anniversary of the opening of the Chapel, which was given by Mrs. Guthrie in memory of her husband, Canon Guthrie, the first Chairman of the College Council.

the life of a man, is a mere nothing in the life of a society.

That Michaelmas day in the autumn of 1862 when this College began its life is but as yesterday; and yet the interval has sufficed to weave a web of surpassing interest to some hundreds that have already lived and grown here, and to countless numbers that are to come after us. These few years have been sufficient for the rooting of a new organic life—a life which we know to be in many respects strong and vigorous, and which we believe to be instinct with something of high purpose, and destined to rise to things not yet attained—a life that will not die.

Our society affords indeed a striking instance of the rapid growth of manifold and lasting associations. We have only to let our thoughts travel round the place for a moment—this chapel with its voices and aspirations, the playground and the class-room, the library and the house, with all their lifelong memories, joys and sorrows, the friendships not to be forgotten, the purposes that have been born amongst us to work themselves out in issues which we do not know as yet—these all together make up a rich and varied product of our twelve years' common life.

By strangers coming amongst us I am often told that we have been very prosperous; and the word is true, though perhaps inadequate. Without doubt it is not a

small thing to have grown in these few years from humble beginnings without any special advantages, without any assistance or any favour from those who are counted great, or noble, or distinguished in the world, to be such a community as we have now become, with all its intricate and many-sided life, and all its quick and wide-reaching pulsations of mutual influence. Our numbers alone must make us a subject of manifold interest in many widely-scattered homes, a subject of daily and nightly prayer in many a secret chamber, of affectionate retrospective thought in many a lonely place by land and sea.

But it is not only this: from causes which I will not attempt to set before you, we have come to be looked upon as in some sort one of the great schools of our country, one of that circle of schools, never a large circle, which attract the general attention of educated men, because they see in them, or think they see, something of position or influence or character which is destined to give them a peculiar hold upon the life of the nation in years to come.

A preacher unconnected with us might very possibly have told us something of this kind, and with more emphasis than I can employ. And it may be good for every one of us to remember so much, not with any vain pride—God forbid!—for what are we, any of us, that we should dare to boast? "We have this treasure

in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Let us rather take the fact as a reminder to bethink ourselves how we do our work and live our life in this conspicuous place, or when we carry its name with us out into the world.

Such a warning is seldom altogether uncalled for. Prosperity has its peculiar risks for almost all of us, but more particularly for those who may have entered into any share of that for which others have laboured; whose life has not been sobered by daily care and thought, by anxiety or sorrow or disappointment, or who do not feel how delicate a thing is the inner anatomy of that which outwardly seems so fair and strong, and who have not to bear the burden and the strain of it. To most men few things are more offensive than to hear some scarce worthy member of any great or growing society boasting of its perfections or superiority, while perhaps he is doing nothing to add to its good name, or it may be is even helping to detract from it. To the humble or reverent or devout mind few things are more discordant than such vain babbling.

Let us cultivate a reverent and humble spirit, whilst yet we do not depreciate ourselves too much, or forget our high calling. If we were content to judge our life by the common standard, by the standard, that is, which is generally reached in other such communities, or again by such standards of life, language, conduct, and aim as

are generally prevalent in the society of grown men, we might very possibly find that we have some reasons for thankfulness; but we should not set about judging ourselves, as God will certainly not judge us, by any such standard of comparisons. It behoves us rather to consider in all seriousness what the members of any great school ought to be doing as they live in it, fixing, moulding, modifying its life; or as they go out from it, carrying its name for good or evil.

Are we living with the thought in our minds that a school of any enduring worth must be a centre, a focus, a very sacred hearth of the higher life of the time? that there ought to be a clear and active purpose in its leaders, nay, in the majority of its average members, to raise the general life of men in some respect or other, to rectify its standards where they may be defective, to set their faces against things or notions in regard to which the world has gone astray?

It is incumbent upon us at least to think a little on a day like this what it is or would be for us to belong to such a society, a society inspired by such thoughts and feelings. It is a great thing for any one to feel his membership of such a body, or to have it said of him that he came out from any such, and bears the stamp and mark of it.

In proportion as this feeling is common amongst us here, and stamped clear and legible on the character of

those who go into the world from us, will be our realization of that which is as yet the unrealized, the unapproached ideal of a Christian school.

Possibly on such a day as this a great many of us feel all these things a little more vividly than at other times. We are very apt to forget them on ordinary days as we travel the familiar round of common duties, or as we go out and mix in other societies, in which we feel ourselves very likely to be but small and uninfluential, unregarded, and, as we are too apt to think, insignificant elements, yet in reality being not insignificant, and not without our influence. When the spirit of a special day, or season, or place, or association, is not immediately acting upon us, those who consider these higher things of school life in any practical way must be allowed to be only the few, yea even the very few.

Yet to the elder portion of us at any rate, men and boys, the call comes with sufficient clearness. What answer have we ready to return to its questioning voice? I have committed unto you, it seems to say, a great and sacred charge, all the possibilities of this undeveloped life. What account are you preparing to render of them?

How many of us can say that day by day we set our faces to all this with any definite or serious aim; that our personal life is marked and characterized by any-

thing which can rightly be called a distinct religious purpose that we are consciously and methodically and professedly doing anything to raise the moral life, to quicken the spiritual life, to stimulate the intellectual life; that we are making it our business to set an example of simplicity in taste and habits and of abstinence from luxurious indulgences, an example so much needed in our day, or that we are spreading the spirit of generous and self-denying manliness? Verily the harvest is a very plenteous one, and no doubt there are many faithful labourers; but yet it is impossible not to feel how far, how very far, the common life falls short of any ideal which bears description, or which satisfies our thoughts when we meet together as we are met to-day.

Our great historic schools appeal to their age and their traditions, their antecedent life and its memories, the names of men distinguished in church and state, and these are powerful voices. But these are not for us, or for this place in our day, though very likely there are some amongst us in this congregation, whose names may some day be to those hereafter a watchword to call them to a higher and worthier life.

Nay, brethren, young as we are, some of us are already not without our memories in this respect. We think of the master whose pure and earnest spirit burned amongst us for a little while like a lamp of sacred fire, or of some early members of our school who helped to

lay foundations of public spirit, of a generous common life, of Christian manliness. We grieve that these have been so soon taken from us, that so very soon we have begun, in the providence of God, to enter upon our inheritance of examples from the past.

But as yet our thoughts in so young a place may turn more naturally, perhaps, to the future which is still unravelled. To any one familiar with the life of schools and the wants of society, that is to say, with the defects of society, or who thinks at all of the work that is to be done in this generation, it must be obvious that there is still a new name to be won among English schools by that one which shall first find out the secret of how to train up and send forth, not a few chosen ones here and there, but the mass of its sons—the rank and file of its members—distinguished by a new combination of qualities and gifts.

I think of the time when, from some school, under some influence which as yet we know not, there shall go forth a new generation of men who shall be characterized, not by some special gift, not by some literary accomplishment, or some varnish of culture, but by a combination of gifts and strength and spirit, which shall stamp them as prominent workers, if not as leaders and prophets, in the next stage of our country's progress. There is abundant room, to say nothing of the crying need, for these missionaries of a new type, who shall

be men of cultivated and disciplined intellect, enlightened and strong; who shall be sworn to the new chivalry of personal purity and the suppression of the baser animal appetites; who shall be men of simple and pure tastes, no epicurean sentimentalists, the declared enemies of luxury, whether vulgar or refined; men, again, in whom public spirit and social purpose shall be practical and guiding motives, not vague and intermittent sentiments, who shall feel the call to alter those conditions of life, which are working so destructively in all our cities; men who, with all this, are not bigoted, who shall have learned to know that earnestness and toleration are not incompatible, who shall have no respect either for that spurious young man's liberalism, which is the child of indifference, nay, which is begotten by shallow criticism, of cynicism as its mother, and nursed by luxury and want of faith; above all, men whose life shall be guided by a serious and humble and reverent spirit, who may fairly be described as faithful, and religious, and devout.

The thought of such a race, you will say perhaps, is the idle vision of a dream. Yet, brethren, it is the vision of the only city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. Looking through, and beyond, and above our present imperfect life, with all its negligences and its ignorances, its failures and its waste, these are some of the things which we trust shall

be seen hereafter; but not in our time, perhaps, or only here and there and now and then.

It is because we see flashes of them here and there; it is because there rise amongst us now and then those who seem to be the forerunners of the new age, that we are justified, nay more than justified, in dreaming such dreams. We must not surrender our idealism, or our life will fail miserably, as so much of the life in the great outside world is miserably failing every day.

Let us pray that we each of us may do something towards hastening that happier time, when such men as I have attempted to describe shall go forth, a great army, from every Christian school; for so, and not otherwise, shall we be doing something to hasten the coming of that kingdom for which we pray, though perhaps vaguely, perhaps insincerely, every time we address ourselves to our Father in heaven, in the language of the Divine Son, to Whom let us give thanks, let us give glory, that He hath enlightened us thus far, and that He hath dealt so kindly with us.

II.

THE UNACCOMPLISHED WORK OF SCHOOLS.

I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.—St. John ix. 4.

So spake our Saviour, in words which He evidently meant to apply not only to His own individual life but to that of every child of man. No doubt He felt that the day of His own earthly work was declining, *νὺξ ἔρχεται*, and that the time was short; and so He made haste to fulfil His mission. Subject to human conditions, He was anxious to lose nothing of the brief day of His opportunity, anxious that no labour of healing or love might be left undone when the dark night of Gethsemane and the Cross should come upon Him. But these proverbial words of His rise also to the height of a universal declaration, "There is coming a night when no man can work."

We know it, all of us. The night is continually casting its irrevocable shadow over some part or other of our life. We require neither preacher nor philosopher to tell us that the time is short, and that it slips from us

like water. If there is any lesson which ought to need but little enforcing, it is surely this one.

Though we may be blind and deaf to most other teachings, nature herself, it may be said, presses this upon us by experiences which we cannot escape. And so, no doubt, she does; the very circumstances of our life here, change, and growth, and loss, and opportunities gone which come no more, and unexpected warnings which come to startle us, these are continually crying around us with their various voices; if we hear not one surely some other reaches us, and yet many of us learn scarcely anything from them, so great is our capacity for refusing to learn. The tenacious hold of passion, appetite, or temper, on men's minds, their comparative indifference to all but present gain or advantage, or it may be present indulgence—these things, in spite of every experience, warning, or conviction, in spite also of the additional voice which we hear in our own hatred and contempt for them, maintain a power over our life which is absolutely marvellous. Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? I trust that it may be ours to join in some degree in the Pauline answer, and to thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. As we think of men in general we cannot but feel how very slow is the growth of a regenerate life; so slow indeed that the veriest commonplaces, things made familiar by a thousand repetitions, are our most sorely needed

lessons. It is in fact with our spiritual and moral life just as it is apt to be with the intellectual. There is a wealth that tends to poverty.

Let us consider it a little with reference to your school-time here. Some of you grow from infancy to manhood getting instruction every day in learning to which it must be confessed that you never really listen. I speak, of course, of some only, and not of all, thank God. They that are whole need not the physician. I speak of those of you who never bend your faculties to grasp your learning, never strive to master any difficulty that comes in your way; and so it follows that neither having nor endeavouring to have any desire for the knowledge which is daily thrust upon you, you learn only useless scraps, and all thoroughness goes out of your mind, and moreover all capacity for thoroughness.

Thus it has happened to me again and again in the course of my life to see the clear, intelligent, accurate child of ten years old disappoint all the hopes of those who love and care for him, simply because he has drifted into this habit of inattention and idleness; and so I have found him at fourteen inaccurate, slovenly, unintelligent; and there are many who travel along this broad road to a manhood of dulness, or stupidity, or ignorance, or depraved tastes. Thus it happens amongst us, as others would tell you it happens in other places, that of two boys of equal gifts one becomes accurate and accom-

plished in classical or general learning; laying the foundations of true culture, he learns the pleasures of an educated man; the other becomes inaccurate, uncertain, intellectually hopeless; or one by the discipline of habitual thought grows steadily in mathematical and general scientific capacity, the other remains incapable of grasping a single scientific idea, and sometimes, nay not uncommonly it would even seem as if he nursed a sort of foolish pride in his own intellectual feebleness. So the night cometh.

Half of what we call our failures among you are just of this kind, arising from your own self-chosen intellectual waste; and the great problem, which is always before every earnest master in all schools, unsolved, or solved but partially, is not how to teach you more and better things, but how to destroy from among you the habit of slovenly carelessness, which eats out intellectual force as a canker might eat it.

Turn now from this to your moral and spiritual nature, and the tale is very much the same.

I should teach the lessons of a Christian life with a more certain hope to those who had never before heard them, than possibly to some of you, who have listened to them from the cradle upwards, because their ears would be wide open to the new message, whilst yours, in some cases (again, thank God, it is only of some I speak), are dull and inert, as you hear, or scarcely hear, the oft-

repeated call which seems to sound so familiar, but of which you really know so very little. You have heard incessantly of the power of the Saviour's Life and Death and Resurrection to regenerate your own life; you have heard of the healing, purifying, strengthening effects of earnest prayer; you have heard such warnings as that of my text about the coming night, and the opportunity that slips away and does not return, and a thousand other such lessons; but what have you learned from all this? What movements does the mention of it stir in your soul? What hold has any one of these things laid upon your life, and what fruits can you show for it? These are very plain questions; and if it should happen to any of you to be compelled to say that you are conscious of little but the want of taste for spiritual things, how is it? You will find, very likely, that it is just the same as in the matter of your intellectual growth. The secret of it all is that you have never given your soul to these things; there has been no serious and sustained effort, no striving to keep your spirit awake, and to drink day by day of these waters of life. Till some day, perhaps, you begin to think there are no saving powers at all in this Gospel teaching, or in the Divine life of Christ your Lord; whereas, in fact, it is just your own deadness which robs them of all effect upon you.

This goes so far with some men whom we meet about in the world, that when they begin to wake up to moral

and spiritual longings, and wish to be strengthened against sin, they take no account of the Christian motives. They would tell you, perhaps, that they have found them ineffective, whereas, in fact, they have never tried them; they believe themselves enlightened inquirers, whereas really they are only drifting, their nature enfeebled by habit; and they imagine sometimes that they have found some new Gospel, instinct with a new power, whereas in reality they are just travelling along some new variety of an old philosophic path which will fail them, as it has failed others before them.

To you, therefore, to-day, my word is very simple. Open your eyes to the lessons which God showers upon you here or elsewhere, and make the most of your present time.

In all your daily work I have to beg you to be honest and thorough; to aim in all you do at nothing short of what is sound, and in some degree perfect. As you value the sound growth of your intellectual powers, and as you hope to avoid the curse of slovenly, self-incurred ignorance, you will do well to remember the ancient warning, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." But it is not solely or chiefly intellectual energy and intellectual honesty that I wish to press upon you.

About the cankerous results of idleness there are many things to say, and they would not be altogether

inappropriate at this season. I would that you could all be persuaded that you have a mind of indefinite power to cultivate, and that to be idle is to destroy it.

But I confine myself to-day to more general intimations, to words that apply to our whole attitude and life, comprehending alike our work and social intercourse, our intellectual, our moral, and our spiritual nature; for it is on all these things our thoughts should dwell, when we repeat to ourselves the text, which is both our call and our warning, "I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh."

Every one of us has to make these words his own in some peculiar and especial sense, according to our peculiar position or character.

We masters among you especially have to make it the constant watchword of our life. You are our husbandry, and our time is short. If our work is not done upon you quickly, if the Christian life is not sown and rooted as a living thing in your soul, then some other influence than ours is leading you captive, intellect, and soul, and spirit; and if our work is a failure this term it may be too late next term; your nature may be hardened, or enfeebled, or distorted beyond our power to renew it, or you may have gone from us into some sphere of new and old temptations unarmed for your future battles; or the night of death may possibly have cast its cold shadow over you, and dropped the dark veil. And if

these things make us anxious to do our work while it is day, have they no voice that rouses you to good resolves, no call to do likewise?

If some of those who come back to us for our Commemoration gatherings were to tell you all their thoughts on this subject, they would be eloquent with a peculiar eloquence.

These occasions press upon us with unusual force the call to make haste to redeem the time, to work while it is day. The very changes which are continually taking place amongst us, and which these days bring so prominently before our eyes, as those who have gone out into the world are here again for a moment, as friend meets with friend, or remembers that he will meet him no more; these are quite enough to rouse us to serious thought and a better life.

It is a commonplace among preachers often repeated that those whom they are addressing will very likely not meet again in one company for worship or praise. And whatever significance or warning there may be in this to any of you, it is peculiarly true at any rate of a society like ours at such a season as the present.

These partings and changes, these revisitings of the home of early years, produce a natural seriousness of thought about the irrevocable lapse of human life, and the onward tide which never flows back again, or as you say sometimes in familiar phrase, these things set

us thinking. And so we feel these commonplaces, these familiar truisms about time and its changes, about the shortness of our day and the coming night, to be living and speaking truths to us, because they are instinct with a special meaning. We feel their force when we think of the past. Let us not forget the present and the future.

Already we begin to feel that we are growing older, and impartial time is beginning to mark our growth with some of the dark lines which, while they are fresh, make some of us smart with the feeling of loss or vacancy, but by-and-by soften down into what remains for individuals as a strengthening and inspiring memory, and lives somehow in the society at large as what men call a good tradition.

These Commemorations will come and go, and year by year one such line will be added to another.

We complain sometimes, or it may be that others tell us, that we lack something of the force, the depth, the elevation, the intensity, which is produced in a society by an atmosphere of rich memories from the past. And, possibly, those of us who are acquainted with the best of other societies like our own, may feel sometimes that there is an element of truth in the charge. But let us be patient; time will bring them to us with a step which we shall certainly not complain of as one which is too slow.

We pray for growth in tone and in spirit, and in those associations which may help us to follow that which is good, giving strength to the feeble amongst us and confirming the waverers in the right way, by all means let us continue our prayer and not grow weary; and yet we know that we shall pay a heavy price for our worthiest memories and our most inspiring traditions.

No doubt it is a gain to live in places where men, if they feel anything, must feel themselves the inheritors of great traditions, sons in fact of noble fathers, and so charged with a call to an equally noble life; and in such places it must surely be felt by the living as a noble task to fan the flame of high purpose which the past has lighted for them.

If in a place like ours we are not yet rich in such memories, let us cherish the more those which God is giving us, and let us prize the more all the good work and good example, the high spirit and purpose, which may have been exhibited here, or by those whom we claim as sons and brothers; and let us take care on our part that our life can show the impress of these in whatever shape they come to us. And so I trust we shall strive, all of us, to show ourselves not altogether unworthy of the best which has been or which is still amongst us; that we too in our day, when our life's work is done, may leave behind us somewhat of an

ennobling memory; and that we too may be counted worthy to add another stone to the everlasting foundations of our society's higher life.

And once more, let us remember that our day is short, and that now is the time appointed for us, masters and boys, and workers in the great world all alike.

Thinking of these things, we shall all set our faces forward with some resolution stronger than a common one, that we will work the works of Him Who sent us while it is day, and before the night shall come upon us.

Let us who live here resolve, then, that through these weeks and years we will live no life but the pure, the honest, the true life; that we will put our hand to nothing which we dare not let the light of God's Presence shine upon; and that, by prayer and thought, and word and act, we will strive to go forward as those must go who would enter at last into the joy of their Lord, and be welcomed by Him as faithful servants. And those who have gone from us—here to-day, or here only in thought—of them, for them let us pray that they may be inspired with some worthy purpose, and not forget the shortness of the time, or the call that is upon them.

III.

THE UNACCOMPLISHED WORK OF SCHOOLS.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.—ROMANS xii. 2.

I DO not know how far such words as these convey any definite meaning to the majority of a congregation like ours, but I have a suspicion that we listen to them, most of us, in a vague and dreamy sort of way.

We do not mean to neglect any call that may be implied in them; we would not be wilfully disobedient; for we are not sons of Belial; our intention is to live the Christian life, and we suppose that this is a call to that life. But perhaps we do not see, or we do not sufficiently consider, where exactly the call touches upon our life of every day.

Yet there are some very plain lessons in such a call as this—"Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

I was forcibly reminded of one of these not very long

ago when a parent, in writing about his sons' work and prospects, made use of language something like this: "My sons have brought home with them a most objectionable word, which to my mind is fatal to all prospect of distinction; and it seems to be a favourite expression with them and their companions. They are abundantly satisfied if they can only describe themselves as 'average.' Everything seems to be measured by this standard of the average. Whether I speak to them on the subject of books, or of their work, or their play, the answer always comes back to me in this abominable word. If I give them fatherly counsel with reference to their characters, their defence is sure to be that they are quite up to the average; as to endeavouring," he went on to say, "to raise the average of their school or society by any industry or purpose beyond what is common, that seems to be thrust aside as a thing which has never occurred to them."

Here we have presented to us in homely language what is no doubt a somewhat common character, that which is quite content with being like its neighbours, which does as others do, which takes life and society as it finds them, and floats with the stream as a matter of course.

But surely this talk about being up to the average, this aiming at being just what your neighbours are and nothing better, sounds very strange when we think of

it as coming from a disciple of Christ. It would seem as if those who use it had just reversed these fundamental precepts of the New Testament, and had understood St. Paul to say—"Take care that you be *con*formed, not *trans*formed; be like the time; do not be worse than your neighbours; but, being about as good as they, be content; to push forward is no particular call of yours; to aim higher is perhaps fanaticism; *αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων*—that, however you understand it, is only a heathen maxim."

Nay, believe me, this contented acceptance of an average life as all that you need strive after, can only arise out of a mean or base conception of that which you were meant to be and do. It is a fatal mistake to begin life so; a mistake suggested, perhaps, by your own indolence or want of courage. If you believe the teaching of your Bible, you know it to be a mistake.

When you hear the call of God in the Old Testament saying to you, "Ye are My witnesses," you know that this call means witnesses to something very different from the average; it means witnesses to the fact that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways. When the Saviour reminds us that we are the salt of the earth, we know very well what is implied in such teaching; and we know, too, that when we fall under the influence of these notions about the average, and when we dare to plead our average con-

dition in work, attainments, character, or conduct, our salt is losing its savour. Once again, when St. Paul entreats us, as we hope for salvation in Christ, not to be *conformed* to the common life of men, he means, in plain language, that we should judge ourselves by an entirely different standard; that we should set before our eyes a different aim and purpose. He seems to say, "Take care that you get away from the average and escape from it; you sons of God, you for whom Christ died, you, called of God and chosen, heirs of the endless life, it is the very essence of your vocation to rise above the average; nay, the first of all questions which our common Lord will put to you when He comes to take account of our life will be, What have you done to raise the average, to shake off the chains of custom and fashion and depraved pandemic notions?"

Yet we are strongly tempted to forget all this; our life is so public, we depend so much on one another, the machine of our common society is so active, quick-moving, and strong, it is so natural to accept the standard we see and feel all round us, it is so much easier also; and then again public opinion is so much more of a god to us than any other God. It is not surprising that we should hear it said or implied or pleaded now and then; or that we should feel it far more frequently to be a commonly accepted though unconfessed principle, that it is enough for us to keep

somewhere about the common standard; but though it may not surprise us, it may grieve us none the less if we think of all the waste which this involves.

And our temptations to be content with the average life come to us sometimes in subtle and insidious forms. They will suggest to us perhaps that the general standard is a high one, that this is what men say of our life, and that if we only maintain this high standard, if we only leave it as we found it, we do enough, nay, we do well.

But let us beware of all such suggestions. We make life infinitely harder and infinitely more dangerous if we once begin to lend a willing ear to this class of temptations. Turn round for a moment and consider the bracing influence upon your soul of other and different thoughts. Men talk of the average standard, or of the standard being a pretty high one, of its being creditable if we maintain it, but surely there are many things in which, God helping me, I can rise above it, in which I can do something to raise it higher, possibly even to set it on a new basis, nay, it may be, to move it from the quicksand to the rock. I consider, for instance, my own daily life and the atmosphere in which I move; and I am certain that there are some things to be done for the standard of industry, for the standard of truthfulness, of high-mindedness, of refinement and good manners, of intellectual conscientiousness. So I feel sure many of you might very well reason with yourselves, as you sit

here, and think of all the round of your common life. And would it not be well perhaps, if you were to add to your thoughts some such questionings as these, whether the standard of refined and Christian modesty, of piety, of reverence, of purity, would not bear to be lifted higher, and whether you could not so lift it?

You will never be able to do anything of the sort, you too will be one of the slaves to this average life of men, unless you have learned something of the secret, the separate, the independent, the higher life, the life that is hid with Christ in God.

And how very foolish it is for any of us to leave this side of our life uncultivated, to become mere parasites, as some men do, of the society to which we may belong for the moment.

Have you a good intention to rise above the average life in any respect? Do you feel perhaps the unsatisfactory character of that life? Then the call is on you to raise it to a higher level; and your present duty is so to live that you may get the power to do this.

You have the will or the purpose. There are thoughts within you which spur you on to do it, there are monitors telling you it is your duty to do it, but you lack the strength, you think, or you lack the courage. You are content to remain like the average: or you stand aside and draw apart; the word of the Lord came unto you, and you fled away from His presence. Let us

pray that we may have grace and strength to listen to this word and follow after it, and think no more of the average life, as furnishing us with either standard or excuse.

But that this may come to us we must, I repeat, cultivate something of the separate life; we must remember how Abram went out from his kindred in obedience to the call; we must think of Moses in the desert or on the mountain, of Paul in his unrecorded retirement before he began his mission, and of the Saviour Himself as He went into a mountain apart to pray. Escape sometimes in thought and in prayer from the noise of your surroundings, or you are not likely to attain to that seriousness or elevation of purpose, that disengagement from the opinion of men, and that courage to give effect to your thoughts and aspirations, which together make up the character, transformed and not conformed; the only character which deserves the Christian name, and failing our attainment of which it had perhaps been better for us if we had not been born.

Our gatherings in this chapel have exactly this for their end, that they may give you the opportunity for such spiritual retirement, and detachment from the world, and that there may be effected in your souls the necessary dislodgments. Again, when I step into our library, and feel its undisturbed quiet, and its opportunities for communing with those who for their great-

ness or their worthiness have escaped the average and conquered time, I feel that *there*, also, you have an altar provided for you, at which you may light the torch of the higher life, if you care to light it, and where the average notions of men, the perishing or misleading voices of fashion and custom, should lose their hold over you.

Let us hope that the day may never come when we shall go on in dull neglect of these voices from on high.

Let us pray that we may escape this most detestable heresy that it is enough for us if we are up to the average; and let us remember, as Wordsworth somewhere reminds us, that if we make comparisons at all, it should be with those who have morally excelled us, for "it is our duty to have loved the highest."

IV.*

WHAT HOUSE WILL YE BUILD ME?

Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things? —ACTS vii. 48-50.

OUR first feeling as we meet to worship in this new house of prayer is naturally one of thankfulness and gratitude, that henceforth we have here a place dedicated and set apart for the exercise of our spiritual life. These walls are a witness to our own souls, as they are a witness to all who see them, that we recognise a time and a place in which it is our duty and our practice to draw near to God in a peculiar sense. For the first time we have now a building which is to each of us something different from the buildings round about it; it has a character which they have not, and it claims to be thought of by us as we do not think of them. Not here alone, we trust, is the spiritual element to be found in the life of the school, or in the life of any individual; but here each one of us may expect to find it in fullest

* Preached in the new School Chapel, June 23, 1867.

measure, here there is no rival to dispute with it for the possession of our souls, no other influence to contend against it.

As our life rushes on day by day through the week, with its excitement and hurry, its cares and its thoughtlessness, eddying around these peaceful and silent walls, our thoughts and feelings are necessarily chequered and many-coloured. There is a difference to us between the calm and the quiet inside this chapel, and the life in which we daily mix outside, and round about it. And let us join together and thank God that this is so. There are few of us but must look back on many things in the life of each single week with mixed and varied feelings; some things have brought gladness to our hearts and some sorrow, some have been bitter, some disappointing, some have shown us our strength, some again our weakness, some we shall be glad to cherish in our memory, others we would fain forget. But whatever our retrospect may be at any time, as we sit here we shall find that it is all rolled into one mass; the bright and the dark, the joyful and the sorrowful, the mean and the noble, are all woven into the same web; it is a picture of many hues all running into each other on which we have to look back. But when we cross the threshold of this house, and feel ourselves in this calm atmosphere, which is in itself and by virtue of its very calmness nothing less than the Divine Presence, it is al-

together different with us. Instead of haste and noise, anxiety and bustle, we find that we are in the presence of that spirit of calm, of that spirit of rest, of that spirit of silence, which befits the dignity of our religious life.

Here there is no confusion excepting only what each one makes for himself, or brings with him in the workings of his own turbid soul. There is no clashing of contradictory associations here, no struggle between different influences, no uphill battles to fight against any external circumstances that may hinder us in our serious moods. The breath of heaven is round about us, and we cannot entirely fail to breathe it; we may breathe it fully if we will.

Well then, as we value all the gifts of our higher life, let us accept, with gratitude to Him Whose hand made all these things, this gift of a place around which and in which our spiritual hopes and our spiritual feelings may twine themselves without any fear of being rudely torn away from it. Whatever may be your recollections of your school in years to come; whatever thoughts may remain with you about the time which you have spent here; and, no doubt, in many a case they will be thoughts mixed with bitter regrets—regrets, it may be, for wasted opportunities, regrets for idly spoken words, regrets for evil, bitter, or mean thoughts, and it may be also, in some cases, though God grant it may not be, regrets for sinful and polluting influences sown by you in some pure soul,

which you can purify no more,—yes, whatever may be all the thoughts that crowd back upon you when you have gone away from this place, of this house and these walls your memories ought to be, indeed I think they can hardly fail to be, of one kind and one kind only. Here you come week by week for one object, and you come here for no other: to this one it is set apart and appropriated. You come, if not in a spirit of reverence and humility, at any rate with outward soberness of behaviour, as confessing that this is so. Even if you come with no desire to lift up your hearts in prayer; even if you go away again, time after time, without any feeling that you have so lifted them up; even though you neither bring with you nor gain here any inspiring sense of a God Who besets us round about; even so, I should be thankful that we have this place in which to meet, and that your memories will some day travel back again to the time when you sat upon these benches, and watched the light streaming down through these windows, and sometimes felt the thrill of a familiar strain of sacred music running through your soul, and now and then perhaps were stirred to a resolution, or a hope, or an aspiration, by some word spoken unto you. For the chance of these things I am thankful that we have this place to which your thoughts will turn when you are scattered wherever your duty may call you.

And amidst all the imperfections of our present worship, and all the things that are wanting in our present life, we may take comfort in looking forward to those times in the future when many of you, while far away, will sit again in spirit in the old familiar seat, and will learn the lessons then which, it may be, you are not learning now. Whatever may be the present effect of this house and its services upon your life, about the future there can be, I think, but little doubt. And when that future comes, and you look back again on these quiet hours, it will be strange indeed if you cannot recall some aspirations which sprung up in you here and did not entirely vanish again; if you can look back to no hopes of high things which you first felt in this place, and which did not entirely die; or if you remember no resolutions which you silently made as you sat here, and which were not entirely broken. For my part I rejoice to think that the human hand to which we owe this chapel will thus go on labouring in the vineyard of Christ when you and I have finished our work.

But now, we can hardly rest here. It is true that this material temple of mortar and stone will have its influence upon us even in spite of ourselves. Some of you perhaps for the next few years may live here a thoughtless or an idle, a silly or a sinful life, and the chapel and its services may be nothing at all to you, as far as you yourselves can tell; but even so it will leave

its mark upon you, and some day hereafter its influence will be felt. And my own conviction that this will be so, and that God's word does not return unto Him void, but that the seed which we sow will bring forth its fruit after many days, serves to give me hope and confidence that there will come a time of awakening even to the hardest, a day of solemn memories even to the most frivolous.

But I cannot rest satisfied with this. I am content to sow for the distant future, if no better can be; but better than this I know there must be. This very chapel ought to be to us a sign and a reminder of the work which we have to do now to-day, and not hereafter. Why have these noble buildings been given to us, if it be not in the expectation and hope that we shall labour honestly to make the life and soul of this place worthy of this our outward appearance? I feel no elation as I stand in this house and hear admiring words about its beauty or its nobleness. It speaks to me of a work to be done, which it may be I have not the strength to do; it speaks of another building which we have to raise, and which all we who are here present now, from the oldest of us even down to the very youngest, can help to raise if we will only try; it speaks to me of the temple of a great and thriving school, of a school of which we need not to be ashamed; it speaks of a temple in which industry, and manliness, and purity, and uprightness shall be the

objects which meet the eye, and from which we have all united and striven to banish whatever is mean or base or unworthy. Is it too much, then, to ask of you, while the first impressions of this place are fresh upon your souls, just to resolve that with all your heart you will endeavour to make the life of the school no unworthy counterpart of this building which stands in our midst?

"What house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest?"

This is the kind of question which the echoes of this chapel call upon us to answer? It is no small privilege to be the first generation of those who worship in a place like this. It is no mean work which you have an opportunity of doing, you members of this young society. We are only laying our foundations as yet, and just beginning to feel that we have a life of our own. Consider the time when those who fill your places will have a history and a tradition on which to look back, and consider what you would wish that tradition to be. To-day it is in your hands to make it what you resolve to make it by your own life; a few years hence and you will have done your work upon it. At the very best I know that the building up of a great school on any sure foundation must be a slow and a precarious business; but I should leave the work in despair if I did not feel that you too are anxious, even as I am, to build us up into an honourable house. Three hundred workers of this gene-

ration, if we put our hands to the task with a genuine will, we cannot fail, I think, to grow up into something that deserves to live. But are we thinking of doing this? It is not enough to wish it and leave it to others. It is *your* work to do, or it will not be done.

In the quiet and daily round, in the habitual course of our common life, these foundations of the future are being silently laid. The walls of our temple are slowly rising, and what shape are they beginning to assume? You who know our inner life better than I do, how would you describe it? What is the name which you see written on this temple of our society which is thus rising and growing? Is it the temple of the God of heaven, or of some other god? These outward gifts are of no use if they should be ulcered under with a life which is not worthy of them. To what purpose is this chapel and its beauty, if we who come to it should prove ourselves unworthy of it?

What if the spirit of idleness should take possession of us? What if you who are here to-day should leave, as your inheritance to those who follow you, low or mean notions about truth, or honesty, or manly openness? That the great mass of you should do this I have no sort of fear. It cannot and will not be. But yet this is a time for all of us to consider whether we are giving ourselves, with a true and genuine loyalty, to the building up of a living temple in which the God of truth may be

seen to dwell. Is there no petty selfishness, is there no mean-spiritedness, is there no frivolous folly leaving its unseemly mark amongst us, and spoiling the work which we are endeavouring to do? We have it in our hands to-day to take a high place among the schools of England; or I should say rather that it is in the hands of you boys who are sitting before me; and may God inspire you to show yourselves worthy of this high privilege.

"Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and the servants whom I have chosen."

V.*

SCHOOL MEMORIES.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning
—PSALM cxxxvii. 5.

IT is sometimes said that a great English school resembles the Christian Church of the Apostolic age in some of its most striking characteristics, more closely perhaps than any other institution of our time.

There are those here to-day who will remember how in this chapel, on a memorable occasion, the preacher said, "I do not know any visible organization of men which more nearly represents to us, on a small scale, the description that St. Paul gives of the Church of Christ, than one of our own English schools. There is the same community of life—strong, quick, and penetrating: there is the same independent life of the separate members, blended into the whole and unceasingly influenced, yet never so lost as to interfere with individual character and individual responsibility."†

And you will feel the truth of all this, feeling it in its

* Preached in Rugby School Chapel, Sunday October 20th, Lawrence Sheriffe's Day, 1878.

† Dr. Temple's Tercentenary Sermon.

highest and best sense, feeling it, that is, as something to purify and stimulate your daily life; you will feel it in proportion as your mind is penetrated and possessed by that notion, that standard of school-life, which is associated in the minds of Englishmen with the Rugby of Dr. Arnold and his successors.

With no less truth it might, I think, be said that there are few things in our modern society that come closer to the feelings of an ancient Jew for the city of his fathers, than the feeling which lives in the hearts of the best type of our fellow-countrymen for the school in which they grew up, if it happen to be such a school as yours. This patriotism of the Jew, from the time of the Babylonish captivity, which finds expression in my text, is indeed a very striking phenomenon, whether we consider it in its separatist, exclusive, and fiercer aspect, or look only to that gentler and attractive side of it which is the only one that concerns us in any comparison with our own day, or at any rate in any comparison with school-life and the feelings and habits that grow out of it.

In our reading of the Bible it is possible that some of us scarcely give adequate attention to this element in the Jewish life and character. The patriotism of the Greek and of the Roman—these form subjects for your exercises, and furnish you with historical parallels.

Historians lament sometimes over the decay of

patriotic feeling which the new circumstances of modern life have brought with them. They lament that in this respect an ordinary Englishman falls so far short of an ordinary Athenian; and their lament has justice in it. Undoubtedly our life has lost an influence; and it is a less fruitful life, even sometimes, I fear we must confess it, a meaner life in consequence; and yet we have to confess also that the loss is to some extent inevitable. We cannot love a great sporadic empire, we cannot be expected to love it, as the Athenian or the Jew loved his city with all its familiar outlines, its gleaming beauty and Divine associations. It does not follow that we have lost the feeling;—rather, we believe that it flows in other channels, and sends its fruitful waters through other pores of our life, whether individual or national.

But still the fear will come back to us that somehow there is something lost. Let us recall for a moment what it is that a historian has to speak of when he comes to this theme of ancient patriotism. He begins with examples of heroic self-sacrifice and of passionate devotion, Leonidas, Regulus, Decius, the Maccabees, and a thousand others; and he goes on to tell of the pride of patriotism, the sense of dignity inspired by it, the bond of sympathy it produces, the common aim; the energy, tenacity, and elasticity of character that grow out of it. These, he says, are the parents of great enterprises, and

these were the common inheritance of the nations of antiquity. They did not belong to some great crisis, or to a period of some unusual ferment. They were things of every day, and they pervaded all classes. They formed a distinct type; they were the root and origin of many virtues.* These virtues, you may ask, what were they in particular? The historian's answer is again ready. No other influence, he says, has produced so great a growth of the sterner and more robust virtues, fortitude, self-reliance, intrepidity. And we must add to these, devotion to the common weal, in political as distinct from philanthropic matters, public spirit, general readiness for united action and self-sacrifice. These things, and such as these, make up what we call the old classic type; and it has been well said that never did ordinary men of any other type pass through life with a more majestic dignity, or meet death with a more unflinching calm. The full sublimity of it has never been reproduced in its perfection. Of course there is another side to that ancient life from which we thank God that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has delivered us. I need not tell you of the virtues and the feelings then obscured or undiscovered, which we breathe as the breath of our daily life. Yet in spite of our thankfulness we turn with a lingering regret to the picture of the times when

* See Lecky's remarks on ancient patriotism in his "History of Rationalism in Europe."

these virtues blossomed into such a rare completeness. And one reason why we value so highly our school-life, with all its associations, its discipline and its memories, is, that it does so much to preserve amongst us these same elements of character, calls into play similar feelings, and fosters the same virtues.

As the ancient Athenian or Jew, brooding over the thought of his beloved city, living in the memory of a great historic past, and in the hope of a future no less great, grew out of his own narrow self into a larger, freer, nobler personality, so no doubt it has happened and will happen again and again to many an English schoolboy; or, to come closer home to your own case, leaving the Jew and the Greek and the Roman, and leaving also for a moment, Englishmen of other schools, no doubt it has happened thus to many a one who grew up here, as it is your happiness and privilege to be growing now, that the spirit which is in the air of this place has so entered into his soul, inspiring him with new thoughts and purposes, strengthening him with a new strength, binding him with cords of an enduring love, that he becomes under its influence a new creature; in heart, in purpose, in courage, in affection, in purity, he is a new man henceforth; and here is the birthplace of that new self. And wherever this is so it needs no telling to describe to you the feeling that must for ever unite the life of such a man to this home of his boyhood.

"Behold I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee."

But by what right or claim, you may ask, do I, a stranger among you, a chance visitor, venture on such a subject as this? I have a twofold apology. In the first place, this, I am reminded, is your Founder's day—Lawrence Sheriffe's Day in your calendar—the day on which you commemorate the plain and otherwise undistinguished man, who, in the providence of God, laid the first foundations of your school, three hundred years ago, praying no doubt that it might be the nursing-mother of brave men and good citizens, but never dreaming of the great name that was in store for it, or of the rich inheritance of examples, associations, and inspiring influences that it would one day bring to such as you.

And it is, I suppose, the purpose of these days to recall our thoughts to our relationship with those who have gone before, to stir our feelings and invigorate our purposes with the recollection of this continuous stream of life that has come rolling down to us through the generations of our fathers and fathers' fathers, bearing its rich treasures for our nurture and enjoyment. It is well, too, that such days should be thought of as coming with the reminder to you also, even the youngest, that your frail bark is travelling very fast down this same stream of continuous life with its wealth of opportunities that is in your hands to-day, but returns no more for ever.

But I have another reason for asking your attention to thoughts of this kind for a few minutes this afternoon. The sons of a great house may be so familiar with it as to grow up in it forgetting its greatness, or what their name and their inheritance require of them. This is a matter of obvious and general experience in life. And thus it may be with some of you in your daily round of work and play, trial and temptation, joy and sorrow; so that whilst learning the common lessons, which might be learned anywhere, you miss the great ones, which can only be learned in their fulness in the place appointed for them, and by those who have been admitted and adopted, as you have been, into the fellowship of that spirit which belongs to the place, while their life is young.

Knowing how easily this fate may befall any of us, knowing also how great will be your loss if it befall any of you, I have felt that I might fitly speak of these things, as one who stands outside your life, and yet not altogether outside the influences that have made your life a matter of national interest. As having myself once lived and taught and been a learner in your society many years ago, I may claim a lifelong interest in your fortunes; as being now outside your circle and a stranger to all the varying currents of your present life, I may bear my witness, and remind you, without fear of being misunderstood, as perhaps one of your own masters

could not, how closely and with how keen an interest your life is everywhere observed.

By the necessity of your position, by virtue of the history that attaches to your name, your school and its life are a source of never-failing interest. It is a great thing to be a worthy member of such a school: it is a high honour to sustain or enhance its great name: it is a lasting dishonour if you do anything to sully it.

You cannot forget the great army of those, who once sat in your places, now watching with the interest of an undying affection, from every quarter of the globe, to see how you are maintaining that which has been committed unto you; rejoicing with a joy that is always fresh over your prosperity and successes; and welcoming with pride every new name among you that adds any lustre to your school.

And it cannot be but that the thought of such things gives a glow and a stimulus to every generous spirit among you, and is the parent of good resolves.

All this belongs, I trust, to that class of reflections which a visitor like myself may venture to press upon your attention, when coming back for a moment after a long interval, seeing the familiar place, the same and yet not the same, feeling the spirit of it to be an unchanging spirit, though the lives that constitute it are mostly different, missing the presence of past workers, some gone to their rest long since, some but yesterday.

At such a time, the one thing that comes naturally to the lips, the one thought that rises through all other thoughts, is that of your continuous life, and that you are a privileged generation, possessed of a rare inheritance. The one hope of every friend of the school —and many such must come here Sunday by Sunday, unthought of, unnoticed—whether he utter it, or whether he let it go forth silently, to swell the body of your common worship, is that you may grow up conscious of those voices of the great that are all around you from past times, conscious with that kind of consciousness that humbles men and yet inspires them.

And the greatness of a school—of this school—in what does it consist, and how will it be maintained in the future, as in past years?

Let us hear for a moment its second founder, the man who was himself the impersonation of its greatness, whose name is synonymous with the highest aims of school-life, whose grave adds a peculiar sacredness to this chapel, a peculiar call to earnestness and reverence, as you kneel here in daily worship throughout your growing years. "When I look round," he said, "upon boys or men, there seems to be one point or quality which distinguishes really noble persons from ordinary ones: it is not religious feeling—it is not honesty or kindness—it is moral thoughtfulness, which is at once strengthening and softening and elevating; which makes

a man love Christ instead of being a fanatic, and love truth without being cold or hard."

That was the type which he imprinted on this home of his labours, and which constitutes its peculiar nobleness. And in consequence, as is that nobler personality, which he speaks of, amongst individuals, distinguished by this characteristic of moral thoughtfulness; that quality which above all else deepens as years advance into patient tolerance and undying love, which blooms as boyhood grows to manhood, into purity, and strength, and courage, and unaffected simplicity of life; so has been, and so no doubt will continue to be, your school amongst other schools, generation by generation, holding fast this treasure that has been committed unto it, nursing this sacred fire of a moral enthusiasm, which the world cannot quench, and which will mark you always and in all places as the sons of a great and noble house, and not unworthy of its greatness.

O Almighty God, Who hast knit together Thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical Body of Thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow Thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which Thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

VI.*

FAREWELL SERMON.

A little one shall become a thousand.—ISAIAH lx. 22.

WE have reason as members of this society for something of that spirit of thankfulness which is so conspicuous on the pages of the Old Testament, when effort has been crowned by prosperous issue, or as the Israelite would have expressed it in his reverent phrase, when God has prospered the work of men's hands upon them. The blessing of the patriarch, we might say not inappropriately, has been the blessing of our community —"With my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now Thou hast made me two bands." There was thankfulness, gratitude, humility, in this acknowledgment of the Divine goodness; but no elation, no foolish pride; as there can be none anywhere, in any one who rightly appreciates the conditions of any real growth in his own personal fortunes, or any greatness in a human society. It is, therefore, to thankfulness and humility as the root of our future hope that I venture to invite you this afternoon. And you will acknowledge that these things

* Preached, Sunday April 6, 1879.

become us, situated as we are. It is but sixteen years ago, or a little over, a time that falls within the compass of the years of a great many of you who are still boys, that our school had its beginning. At that time this place, which is now an inseparable part of so many lives, had no human association connected with it; it stirred no emotion in men's minds, it was the centre of no memories, the home of no affections; and it is very natural (though of course it is a commonplace) to dwell for a moment on the contrast, when we think of the multitudinous and ever-increasing pulsations of the hearts that are beating in responsive unison with the life that you now live.

To-day we may say without fear of contradiction (and why should the false pride that apes humility prevent us from saying it and drawing our lesson from it?) that there are few schools more widely or more favourably known throughout our kingdom and its dependencies; that there are few, if any, that possess a fuller, more varied, more active, and, let us thank God for it, a purer life. Had our age been three hundred instead of sixteen years, I do not know that for all essential and highest purposes it would have been very different with us. There would no doubt have been some distinguished names, some dear and distant memories, venerable relics, fading pictures, that interweaving of death and life, awaking in us that sense of deep and far-stretching roots, and

of a personal connection with the long-buried past, which nothing can give to us but lapse of time and local associations. And the value of such possessions I would not depreciate—they are very precious. I do not envy the dull-souled man in whose eyes they have no value, and on whose thought and feelings they exercise no influence.

Saving this, however, it is hard to say what element of common life we lack which can be seen working effectively in other schools, or in what sense your life is a poorer life than it would have been in one of those time-honoured and distinguished communities which are not unknown to a great many of you. If this be so, is it not a cause for thankfulness both on your part and ours? I do not refer to this that any one of us may think of it with silly pride, God forbid! but rather that you may recollect in the first place how good a thing it is, if rightly used, to grow up as members of such a society; how much it may add, if only you attain to the right consciousness about it, to the happiness, the usefulness, the self-respecting strength of your life hereafter; still more, I linger over it that you may bear in mind the nature of that spirit without which we should not have won the position we have won, without which there is no hope of our permanently maintaining the only position which has real value in it. I speak of course of the spirit which should dwell within us as a constant reminder that our growth has

not resulted from the peculiar merit of any one of us; that it has, on the other hand, been greatly owing to the pervading sense of common membership; a sense of membership that has laid its grasp upon the various lives that have been enrolled amongst us, with a rare and unusual force, so that not only those who may have been placed in what are called responsible positions, not the conspicuous only, or the gifted, the natural leaders, but all through our society, in all its parts and corners, the obscure, the unnoticed, the young, all alike, masters, boys, officers, servants, have caught the infection of our common membership, and have been stirred and stimulated by the feeling that their own personal life, manners, work, and character, were contributing their part to the common whole for evil or for good. Thus we have learned to value each other's life and to reverence our own as a sacred charge committed unto us for the general well-being. All this, if it be consecrated by that sense of Divine surroundings which is the invariable accompaniment of the noblest lives, will find its most natural, its spontaneous expression in some such language as that of the apostle whose zeal, fervour, humility, and world-compelling influence make up our best example, next only to that of Jesus Himself: "Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Feeling this we shall be in no danger of lapsing into a shallow self-complacency; none of us

will be likely to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, because he may have happened to have his share in this quickly growing life.

Nay rather, every one who possesses any insight into the true nature of such a life as ours, or any sensibility to the subtle and precious character of the best elements in such a life, any consciousness of the care with which they must be cherished, or how evanescent they might easily become, will be free enough from all assumption of those superior airs which we may some of us have seen sometimes in the smaller members of great houses. Our youth will help, I trust, to preserve us from such failings, if only because it will at least remind us how that which has grown so quickly might be quickly dissipated; and how we, any of us, almost without knowing it, might help forward this disintegrating process. I speak of course not of our material success, not of our prosperity as measured by numbers or estimated by the ordinary observer; but of that essence of distinguishing tone and character which is the life within the life, the soul of the community—precious beyond estimation if it only have, as I believe it to have in our case, some peculiar excellence; but very susceptible, easily changed, liquid, impressible, evanescent. How shall I describe it, so as to show my sense of the care it needs at the hands of all of us? It is as subtle as the beauty of a wind-swept meadow. Let us

pray for pure and wholesome breezes to renew it continually.

This delicate texture of pure character in a society, so difficult to produce and maintain anywhere, is wrought perhaps less rarely and with less difficulty in young societies than in other places; but in the same proportion it is more easily lost, where most of those who make up the life for the time being are of necessity young, where the society itself is constantly and quickly changing, circumstances which pre-eminently affect our case. It is thus that we have to account for the changes that come so rapidly, and sometimes so unexpectedly, over the life of a school, influencing even the type, the style, the manners of those who grow up in it, and of course their inner life. Sometimes we may even have seen a rapid change in the tide of outward prosperity, difficult to account for in its rapidity and its strength. There are men still in the vigour of life who could tell you of ebbing and varying fortunes, declining numbers, enfeebled tone, as having come now to one, now to another of our great schools, to some of the greatest and, as it might have seemed, the most deeply rooted of them, within the period of their own recollection. And those who have watched the life of any such communities could tell you similarly of waves of influence and changing character overclouding their excellency and threatening at times to tarnish the brightness of their

name. Let us then take the warning as written for our instruction, let us listen to it as our call to humility and carefulness, as showing us how necessary it is to nurse amongst us with unceasing and universal care every element of high purpose and good endeavour and pure living, how necessary also to purge out of our life, our personal life, our corporate life, every seed of vice or mischief. Let us take the warning as our phylactery, boys, masters, old Cliftonians, jealously each of us doing our part, that our young life may be preserved from every disastrous influence.

And what is it above all that we desire to maintain? Surely it is this life within the life, the new leaven of combined influences, working with new power and producing new men.

Do I seem to speak as if I claimed for us something more than an ordinary place among schools? I certainly feel we might fairly claim it.

Our life has not been a mere copy of life in other places; neither is our claim based merely or chiefly on our external characteristics. Men may think of us, very possibly, as chiefly distinguished by encouragement of the newer learning, whilst not neglecting the old. We have the credit, I believe, of a ready and unprejudiced adaptability to changing wants; possibly, also, of better methods of instruction, of economy of time, and a pervading spirit of industry.

And all this, I trust, is true of us; but beyond and behind and beneath it all we ourselves are conscious of that other something which is the real essence of our character, that spirit which permeates and supports our common life, as the life of a planet is permeated and supported by its encircling atmosphere. This beyond all else is that by which we must eventually be judged; and in all humility, but yet in confidence, we may say that this is what we claim as the highest and best result of our common activity, during the brief years in which we have been a school.

If we look at it for a moment from a slightly different point of view, we may say that it is the product of this spirit, on which we rely as the testimony to our life, the type of character that grows up amongst us. How far we succeed in realizing our aim, our hope, our purpose, our main endeavour, it is hardly for us to say even here; but we may venture to speak of our ambition, our desire in this respect.

And that desire has been that they who bear our name should grow to a character, liberal-minded, sympathetic, tolerant, yet not indifferent, or wanting in earnestness and enthusiasm. We would fain see them distinguished by independence, by courage, and by their accompanying simplicity and naturalness; by freedom from affectation, either of fashion or so-called knowledge of the world or conventional hardness. We trust to see

them recognising and remembering that the only life of any worth is that which is distinguished by thoughtfulness, moral thoughtfulness, by the consciousness of surroundings and possibilities higher than ourselves, and a call to realize some of these in our own life here and hereafter, in boyhood, youth, and manhood.

We desire, also, to see them carrying with them into all societies, and we pray that we be not disappointed in this desire, the conviction of the necessity, the indispensable necessity, of the religious, the spiritual element in every man's life, and of the duty of so ordering our personal habits and our observances as to give this life a chance of growth in us, and of bearing its proper fruit. And I should stop short of my own feeling in this matter if I did not add that our hope of all this, our desire for it, our striving after it, is intensified by our sense of the comparative unworthiness of a great deal of the ordinary young man's life, and the call that is laid on every self-respecting man to aim at higher standards.

Whether we think of the spirit of unselfish industry, of mutual sacrifice, of philanthropic labour, or of the call to the truth-seeking spirit, and to the sacred vows of a chaste life, dare we say any of us that we are satisfied with that which has been already attained and that there is no work for us to do? All about in the world the style we meet with, the standards, the language, the

thoughts, the customs, the ordinary tastes, the sporting, the low-toned, the lewd, the cynical,—where in all this do we recognise the latest bloom and fruit of our inherited Christianity, and of the carefully stored civilizations of ancient and modern days? The life of Jesus of Nazareth, which the Gospel has pictured for us, was it a human or was it a Divine life? Either way it must, I think, rebuke and stir us, when we compare the poor and soiled life of common men with its beauty and its purity.

To draw the spirit of young men's lives somewhat nearer to that life has been and will be the ambition of our school; and though here as everywhere it will have to be confessed that they are not all Israel that are of Israel, yet how stimulative, brethren, and how fruitful is the consciousness of our fellowship and its aim. Our school is very young as yet, and her course is just beginning; but already we are conscious of this spirit stirring the life of those who go in and out continually this sacred home of our society, stirring others with mingled affection, pride, regret, resolution, as they follow their call in every quarter of the earth, on the Afghan hills it may be, or on the plains of India, in the plantations of Ceylon, or the sheep-walks of Australia, or the antipodean homes of New Zealand, in the New World of the west, or close at home at their various posts of work and duty.

And yet we are very young: it is only the beginning of that which shall be hereafter.

Yes, we are very young, it is the common remark, it is the constant feeling in our minds.

Let us indulge the Christian's hope that we are young with the best endowments of youth, with strength, with enthusiasm, with glowing purpose, with unselfish aims and a pure life; let us picture to ourselves behind the veil this hope constantly realizing itself down the long series of future years, so that it may be said of our school hereafter, that in these respects Cliftonians are always young; for it is indeed indispensable, if we hope for a continuing and growing life, that in this higher, this spiritual sense, we should cherish an everlasting youth as the one condition of enduring worthiness.

Thus, and not otherwise, may we anticipate that our school may have a claim to a place in that select and blessed company of whom it has been said—

> "To things immortal time can do no wrong,
> For that which never is to die for ever must be young."

Young as we are we have been enabled to apply to our society the prophet's familiar phrase, "A little one shall become a thousand;" and looking back over our brief years, and remembering the lives of those that have come amongst us, masters, boys, most of them still in all their vigour, but some gone beyond the reach of our praise or blame—fervent, manly, self-sacrificing—we

may venture to pray with hope and confidence, in the language of the same glad-hearted Hebrew prophet, that through the lives of boys and men, and the ever-growing influence of a pure and good tradition, the God of Israel will make of our school in the years to come, "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."

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